

**‘A REAL GAP’:
Consequences of Defunding Tasmania’s Reintegration for Ex-Offenders’
Program**

Ebba Herrlander Birgersson
Bachelor of Criminology & Criminal Justice

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School of Social Sciences
University of Tasmania

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Declaration of Originality

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for a degree or diploma by the University or any other institution, except by way of background information and duly acknowledged in the thesis, and to the best of my knowledge and belief no material previously published or written by another person except where due acknowledgement is made in the text of the thesis, nor does the thesis contains any material that infringes copyright.

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Abstract

As Australia's rates of imprisonment, and recidivism rates of returned citizens, continue to rise, it is becoming increasingly important to better understand how to support returning citizens to adequately prepare them for a life post-release and enhance their (re)integration. While recent research focuses on what we need to do to successfully support the community transition of incarcerated persons following release to reduce recidivism, current research focuses on program characteristics and what constitutes a successful program. Consequently, there appears to be a lack of research examining the impacts of removing throughcare support programs designed to successfully transition returning citizens. This exploratory study examines the consequences of removing a successful reintegration program in Tasmania – the Reintegration for Ex-Offenders' Program (REO) – run by The Salvation Army between July 2011 and July 2015, when it was defunded under the Liberal government.

Using a purposive, snowball sampling approach, the study employed a qualitative methodological approach to conduct semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders involved with the REO program. The thematic analysis of the interview data demonstrates that removing a transitional and accommodation support program results in significant consequences, including suicide of returned citizens. In addition to finding a pattern of 'program churn' of funding and defunding a range of support programs for returning citizens, participants highlighted key consequences as: gap in services; lack of support and housing; loss of relationships and trust between service providers and returned citizens, as well as between organisations; loss of human resources; persons remaining in the system for longer than required; persons being released with no transitional support or accommodation, resulting in reoffending; and health implications for returning citizens and service providers. The findings of this study, therefore, have significant implications for understanding the very serious consequences of simple government decisions to defund a program in this sector.

Keywords: Reintegration; REO; homelessness; transitional support; program; recidivism;
public attitudes; Tasmania

DECLARATION

I certify that this thesis does not, to the best of my knowledge and belief:

- i. Incorporate without acknowledgement any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any institution of higher education;
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Definition of Terms

To assist the reader in understanding some of the more frequently used terms within this paper, a list of key terms is provided for reference. This list is by no means exhaustive as there are many colloquial terms used within every section and subsection of society.

Criminal processing system: Many scholars now refer to the criminal justice system as a ‘criminal processing system’, as they challenge the notion that these systems are socially just for victims, offenders, and their families. As mentioned in this thesis, research indicates that the system unevenly processes marginalised and disadvantaged people. As such, this thesis uses ‘criminal processing system’, rather than ‘criminal justice system’.

Incarcerated person: This research refers to incarcerated person(s), rather than inmate, prisoner or offender (where applicable/possible). As will be demonstrated in this research, the labels we prescribe individuals are powerful and difficult to break free from, and as such, the researcher chose to remove any term with a negative association to it.

Returning citizen: As mentioned above, in order to remove negative labels, this research refers to ‘returning citizens’ instead of ex-inmate, ex-offender, former inmate, former offender, etc., in an effort to facilitate their welcome back to the wider community.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction to the thesis

Introduction

Australian incarceration rates are at an all-time high (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2018) and recidivism rates as high as 44.8 per cent nationally (Productivity Commission, 2018). The average daily imprisonment rate in June 2018 was 222 per 100,000 adult population (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2018), up from 164 per 100,000 adult population in June 2008 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2008), and the number of overall persons in custody has increased by 39 per cent in the last five years (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2018). These rates have increased over the last five years, despite rates for most offences decreasing (Australian Institute of Criminology, 2016; Smith, Jorna, Sweeney & Fuller 2014).

As Australia's prison population continues to expand, and recidivism rates of previously incarcerated individuals rise (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2008; 2018; Productivity Commission, 2018, Figure CA.4), it is imperative that we increase our understanding of how to reduce recidivism, and support returning citizens on their journey to becoming contributing citizens who are (re)integrated into their local communities. This is especially important to explore further given that re-incarcerating previously incarcerated persons further punishes an already marginalised and disadvantaged group (Baldry, McDonnel, Maplestone, & Peeters, 2003b; 2006; Jones-Finer & Nellis, 1998). More importantly, releasing previously incarcerated people without relevant support means they often end up homeless, without financial assistance, and some without adequate mental health support (Cutcher, Degenhardt, Alati & Kinner, 2014). Releasing people from prison without

support can have tragic consequences for community safety, as demonstrated by one extreme example in North Hobart, Tasmania, when a woman was stabbed 22 times by a previously incarcerated person with diagnosed schizophrenia the day after he was released from prison without support, despite displaying signs of a psychotic episode (Hosier, Bevin, & Glumac, 2018).

To avoid tragedies like this, research stresses the importance of transitional accommodation and support services to successfully (re)integrate returning citizens, and to support a pro-social lifestyle (Baldry et al., 2003a; 2003b; 2006; Borzycki & Baldry, 2003; Bradley, Oliver, Richardson & Slayter, 2001; Grimshaw, 2008). There is also increasing research evidence that homelessness and poverty are associated with criminal activity, and strong associations have been found between social integration and homelessness, further affecting reoffending (Baldry et al., 2003a; 2003b; 2006; Borzycki & Baldry, 2003; Bradley et al., 2001; Grimshaw, 2008). Inadequate, inappropriate, or a lack of, housing can result in further criminal activity, such as affiliating with pro-criminal peers, and ‘survival offending’ (Payne, Macgregor, & McDonald, 2015), as discussed in Chapter Two.

This study seeks to further unpack the consequences of inadequate housing in relation to returning citizens’ reintegration. It does this by documenting the consequences of the defunding and removal of a successful reintegration and accommodation support program in Tasmania, the Reintegration for Ex-Offenders’ program (REO), which offered transitional support to incarcerated persons pre- and post-release. The study seeks to better understand the gap created by the defunding of the REO program, and the consequences for staff and returning citizens, by interviewing stakeholders involved in the program.

Background: Why this study now

There are a five key reasons why this research is needed at this point in time. These include Australia’s failure to meet its criminal processing system aims, the financial burden of incarceration, reducing stigma of returning citizens, the place of punishment in Tasmania’s history, and, the place of Tasmania as an outlier within the Australian criminal processing system. In the first instance, although criminal processing systems have five overall aims of retribution, deterrence, incapacitation, rehabilitation, and restoration (Bull, 2010; Mason, 2015), Australia fails to consistently fund rehabilitative and reintegrative measures. This means more people are sent to prison and more people reoffend after a prison sentence. This in turn creates a revolving door that results in overcrowding, which governments address by constructing new prisons, rather than investing in rehabilitative means (such as early intervention, prevention and alternative sentences). This can be seen with introduced punitive measures such as minimum mandatory sentencing, the abolition of suspended sentences (Billings, 2017; Fitz-Gibbon & Roffee, 2017; White, 2017), and the construction of new prisons across the country (see Baldry & Russell, 2017; Carey, 2018; Cornish, 2017; Cowie, 2017). Tasmania is a good example of this, with Tasmania’s prison environments so overcrowded that incarcerated persons are double or triple bunking in cells (Department of Justice, 2017; Whitson, 2017). The Tasmania Prison Service has over the years reached, or exceeded, capacity, which has seen investment in prison expansions (Department of Justice, 2017), and most recently, the pending decision to construct a new prison in Tasmania’s north (Mobbs, 2018).

The second core motivation for conducting this research is a simple one: incarceration is expensive. Total recurrent Australian government expenditure for justice services in 2016-17 was almost \$16.1 billion, with \$4.2 billion spent on corrective services – including prison and community corrections, with an annual growth rate of 2.3 per cent (Productivity

Commission, 2018). In 2016-17, the national recurrent expenditure per incarcerated person per day was \$286. Tasmania, however, spends \$357.77 per person per day - 25% higher than the national average (Productivity Commission, 2018). This means that, on average, it costs about \$130,500 per annum to keep one person incarcerated in Tasmania's prisons. This does not include indirect economic costs, such as loss of employment and deterioration of skills (Travis, Western & Redburn 2014), increased welfare dependence (Sugie, 2012), and health costs. Nor does it take into account social costs, which impact both incarcerated persons and their families (Comfort et al., 2016; La Vigne, Davies & Brazzell, 2008; Murray & Murray, 2010), or intangible costs such as victim pain and suffering. By addressing the revolving prison door, the government can therefore achieve significant savings in prison-associated costs, thus benefitting tax payers. Evidence-based interventions are both effective and cost-beneficial. Successful re-entry to communities reduces recidivism rates, and the return of investment on evidence-based programs are significant and proven to reduce costs for tax-payers (Przybylski, 2008). For example, the total amount spent on the REO program was \$257,000, which saved the government at least \$1,000,000 in policing, court and incarceration costs (Tenants' Union of Tasmania, 2015). It is therefore false economy to rely on incarceration, rather than investing in reintegration programs.

The third reason for exploring this area of concern is linked to how a 'tough on crime' approach continues to dominate public discussion about criminality and punishment. Australia's criminal processing system is governed by incapacitation, and our punitive society is politically and culturally motivated by the punitive attitudes of the general public (Brookman & Wiener, 2017; Jones & Weatherburn, 2010; Roberts & Indermaur, 2007). Media sensationalises crime, contributing to a fear of crime, which further facilitates the development of 'folk devils' (Clifford & White, 2017). Despite being based on incomplete or false information, the public's punitive attitudes drive punitive policy decisions (Roberts &

Indermaur, 2007; Spiranovic, Roberts & Indermaur, 2011). For instance, mandatory sentencing was introduced for certain offences, alongside three strike policies, after Martinson’s review on rehabilitative cases concluded that ‘nothing works’ (Carcach & Grant, 1999; Foster, 2011; Hoel & Gelb, 2008; Howells & Day, 1999). Since rebutted, researchers now ask: ‘What works best?’, focusing on treatment needs based on offence and demographic characteristics (Day, Howells, & Rickwood, 2004; Howells & Day, 1999). However, incarcerated persons are still subject to significant stigma. The structures of criminal processing systems do not facilitate reintegration and subject returning citizens to conditions that ultimately set them up for failure, such as no alcohol consumption for parole releasees or suspended driver licenses – creating major issues for those expected to attend programs, find employment, and have pro-social routines (Halsey, 2010). These restrictions function as constant reminders that returning citizens are outsiders, creating social exclusion from family and friends and enhancing the risk of reoffending (Halsey & Harris, 2011). It is clear that, despite knowledge about best practice, Australia continues to use criminal processing systems as punitive institutions rather than rehabilitative ones, regardless of yearly increases in prison numbers (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2014; 2017; 2018), and burgeoning research demonstrating that this approach is ineffective (Cullen, Jonson & Nagin, 2011; Elikann, 1996; Kelly, 2015; Lynch & Sabol, 1997).

Background: Why this study in Tasmania

Ironically, the fourth reason for doing this research in Tasmania now emerges from history: punishment has not always been a defining theme in Tasmania. Nineteenth century Australia faced a unique scenario as it received England’s most dangerous offenders. Tasmania accrued the highest number of transported convicts (42% of the total transported to Australia) including the most serious convicts, resulting in a significantly higher crime rate than other

states (Reynolds, 1969). Yet, by the end of the nineteenth century, Tasmania had significantly lower crime rates than the rest of Australia. This remarkable crime reduction can be attributed to the early rise of the welfare state and the implementation of reintegration policies across Australia, but more importantly, the notion that convicts were valuable, and with support could be reformed to be productive members of society (Reynolds, 1969). Nationally, convicts were treated as human beings, serving their time in open prisons, with access to family – for example, married convicts in Sydney stayed with their wives at night, and were given Fridays and Saturdays together to support their families (Braithwaite, 2001). The implementation of economic, social, and church reintegration policies saw the creation of assignment, ticket-of-leave, conditional pardon, and certificate of freedom (Braithwaite, 2001). Economic reintegration policies introduced paid work prior to release to facilitate transition back into society, and emancipated convicts were destigmatised and awarded free grants of land, animals, tools and seeds to become economically viable settlers – who in turn became masters of assigned convicts. Despite its initial density of convicts and high crime rates, Tasmania’s implementation of social welfare policies far superior to the rest of Australia came to fruition and reduced crime (Reynolds, 1969). This focus on social and economic reintegration produced high levels of procedural justice and re-established convicts as ordinary citizens, thus facilitating their reintegration with communities (Braithwaite, 2001).

The fifth reason for conducting this research emerges out of how Tasmania continues to be an outlier in the overall punitive Australian criminal processing landscape. In 2014, Tasmania was the only state that saw a decline in prison numbers, with a decrease of seven per cent and the lowest imprisonment rate at 112 incarcerated persons per 100,000 adult population (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2014). White (2015) suggests this decline was due to the expansion of better support services within the corrections system, the

establishment of innovative and engaging offender projects, and the use of systemic measures that encourage rehabilitation ideals. Rehabilitation and support programs implemented over the years include health programs, tailored programs for those convicted of sexual offences, and literacy and parenting projects such as ‘Storybook Dads’ to encourage incarcerated persons to read and record stories for their children (White, 2015). Coupled with an increase in approved leave permits in 2013-14, to 18,900 from 589 permits in 2009-10 (White, 2015), Tasmania arguably employs a rehabilitative and progressive approach, including involving minimum security incarcerated persons in bushfire recovery efforts, and local cricket and football assistance, assisting in community transition upon release. Tasmania has over the years had a variety of rehabilitation and reintegration support programs. Programs, such as the Parolees’ Transitional Accommodation Project (PTAP) and the Transitional Support Model for ex-Prisoners (TSMP), were conducted in recognition that 20 per cent of those who applied for parole were denied due to inappropriate, inadequate, or non-existing accommodation, and that homeless returning citizens are more likely to re-offend (Lloyd, Stafford, & Gabriel, 2013; McCrae, 2011). PTAP, TSMP, and the Post Release Options Program (PROP), among others, offered pre- and post-release support through an individual case plan, which addressed criminogenic needs and aimed to enhance life skills to better prepare returning citizens for a life in the community.

All of these reasons demonstrate the importance of having a more in-depth understanding of the complex Tasmanian environment relating to releasing previously incarcerated people. More importantly, it indicates the need to better understand the consequences of defunding successful reintegration programs in this context.

What was the Reintegration for Ex-Offenders’ Program (REO) and why was it suddenly discontinued?

The Reintegration for Ex-Offenders’ program (REO) was implemented upon the completion of two successful pilot studies: Parolees’ Transitional Accommodation Project (PTAP) and the Transitional Support Model for ex-Prisoners (TSMP). The two studies’ target groups were incarcerated persons with longer sentences, and at risk of homelessness post-release, with a recidivism rate around 65 per cent within two years of release. After operating for three years, participant completion resulted in a recidivism rate of less than three per cent (McCrae, 2011).

The Reintegration for Ex-Offenders’ Program was funded by Housing Tasmania between 2011 and 2015 and had the capacity to house sixteen people across the state in transitional accommodation managed by Colony 47 (Lloyd et al., 2013). The program was directed at incarcerated persons who had spent more than six months in prison, and who upon release were, or were at risk of being, homeless. Furthermore, clients had to be ready to implement change, willing to engage with a case manager and participate in the program, and be referred from a Case Coordinator from the Integrated Offender Management (IOM) Unit at Tasmania Prison Service (Lloyd et al., 2013; The Salvation Army, n.d. a). The support was available by referral from the IOM Unit, other service providers, or by self-referral. REO provided support for six weeks prior to release and up to twelve months post-release, and aimed to maximise independence, self-reliance, and reintegration to the community (McCrae, 2011). An individually tailored case plan addressed needs such as budgeting, education, training, employment, recreation, and practical support. REO endeavoured to increase participants’ self-esteem, to instil a positive outlook on the future, to decrease the prevalence of self-harm and suicide, to decrease alcohol and drug dependency, and to reduce anxiety and negative effects of incarceration (The Salvation Army, n.d. a). It also provided support for

physical and mental health issues, and family and relationship breakdowns, through a personal mentor. The program focused on socialising with pro-social acquaintances and supported the client’s family through the reunification process (McCrae, 2011; The Salvation Army, n.d. a). Its holistic throughcare approach facilitated returning citizens’ transition back to the community, resulting in decreased criminal activity (McCrae, 2011).

An independent evaluation by Lloyd et al. (2013) reported that the success rate of the REO program was 93.5 per cent, equating to a recidivism rate of 6.5 per cent compared to recidivism rates of the general prison population of about 46 per cent. There was overwhelming support for the program and its continuation, with clients reporting high levels of satisfaction and advocating for its expansion through Tasmania (Lloyd et al., 2013). Despite the positive evaluation of REO and the positive evaluations of its precursors (Lloyd et al., 2013; van Aaken, 2010; White & O’Halloran, 2011), the Liberal government decided that the program would not receive any more state government funding. The Reintegration for Ex-Offenders’ program was highly successful, and investigating the consequences of its defunding is an important objective.

Upon the defunding of the Reintegration for Ex-Offenders’ program, Housing Connect acquired the accommodation support service for incarcerated persons, thereby including currently incarcerated persons in the general waiting list for accommodation (Parliament of Tasmania, 2015; Tenants’ Union of Tasmania, 2016). In October 2016, it was established that 109 incarcerated persons had applied for housing, but none allocated a house (Tenants’ Union of Tasmania, 2016). This ultimately translates to 109 incarcerated persons who were refused parole and early release (Parliament of Tasmania, 2015), who therefore remained in the system and risked homelessness upon release.

Purpose and significance of the study

While researchers within Australia and internationally have provided knowledge around addressing criminogenic needs and the support required to assist those exiting prison (Baldry et al., 2003a; 2003b; 2006; Borzycki & Baldry, 2003; Bradley et al., 2001; Day et al., 2004; Grimshaw, 2008), limited research has explored the consequences of program dissolutions. This study provides information about the consequences of defunding a successful program which reduced recidivism rates, and supported returning citizens in changing their lives. This is particularly important as the number of Tasmania’s incarcerated persons eligible for parole, and who lack suitable accommodation, has increased (Parliament of Tasmania, 2015), thus indicating a great need for accommodation and transitional support services. It is imperative that returning citizens have access to a dedicated holistic service, which focuses on transitional support alongside accommodation, as their needs differ significantly from the general population (Parsell, Moutou, Lucio, & Parkinson, 2015; Willis, 2018).

Furthermore, this study will provide an understanding of the importance of transitional and accommodation support, and an understanding of what is required to ensure future reintegration program success. By investigating factors that decrease recidivism and promote community engagement, this research has the potential to not only benefit currently and formerly incarcerated persons, but also stakeholders and the wider community. Social inclusion, a pro-social lifestyle, and more time spent with family and friends, encourage returning citizens’ financial and emotional contribution to families and society. Decreased recidivism reduces costs associated with criminal processing systems and incarceration, benefitting government, thus benefitting the wider community through a reduction in prison associated taxes and increased community safety. In addition, this study complements existing research by providing an understanding of issues arising when programs are defunded, and the consequences of program churn. These findings have implications for

those working with this cohort, particularly in departments and governments concerned with supporting marginalised individuals, but more importantly, it has implications for those entering and exiting prison. The study hopes to provide a platform for discussion around the significant consequences that can emerge out of sudden program discontinuation and how our community might move towards ongoing reintegration investment so as to reduce recidivism amongst returning citizens.

Outline of the study

The following outlines the content of the chapters of this thesis. Chapter Two provides an overview of existing literature on previously incarcerated individuals, the impacts of facing homelessness upon release, and its correlation with recidivism. The literature begins by exploring research on returning citizens’ needs and why reintegration support is integral. It then proceeds to examine criminal behaviour and criminogenic needs (Weatherburn, 2001), and how those are exacerbated without accommodation. The literature review then provides an overview of prison populations, including their accommodation experience pre and post-release, compared to the general population, the relationship between homelessness and crime, and the inherent criminality of being homeless. The literature review concludes the discussion with transitional support, the design of transitional support and accommodation programs, and what has been deemed integral to an individual’s successful reintegration to society.

The consultative, qualitative research design used in this study is outlined and justified in Chapter Three. This chapter also describes the purposive, snowball sampling method adopted and justifies the use of semi-structured interviews to generate data in the study. Chapters Four and Five discuss the analysis of the semi-structured interview data collected from people working closely with the REO program. Chapter Four includes a

thematic analysis of the consequences of defunding a transitional support program, and the consequences for previously and currently incarcerated persons, service providers, and the wider community. Chapter Five provides an analysis of the consequences of program churn, and an analysis of the lack of commitment towards rehabilitative measures. Chapter Six concludes with a discussion on the research questions in relation to previous literature, and outlines the important research findings from this study. Chapter Six also presents implications for practice, in addition to noting future research needed to ensure the successful reintegration of returning citizens into communities.

Conclusion

It is essential that Australian state and territory governments reconsider the punitive approach currently employed around people who are being released from incarceration environments. To reduce recidivism and enhance safety in our communities, it is imperative that formerly incarcerated individuals are supported upon their release. This chapter has contended the importance of transitional accommodation support for assisting returning citizens, (re)integrating them into communities, and in turn decreasing their recidivism. The next chapter will provide a literature review of criminogenic needs, post-release needs, and the relationship between homelessness and criminal behaviour.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review: The need for transitional support

Introduction

This chapter critically analyses contemporary literature on returning citizen reintegration, post-release needs, and the relationship between homelessness and criminal behaviour. It will examine the impacts of facing homelessness and social disadvantage upon release, and how it correlates with recidivism. In reviewing this literature, this chapter provides an overview of criminogenic needs and structural societal issues that need to be addressed prior to release, such as homelessness, poverty, and social exclusion. It also reflects on the challenges of reintegration, and highlights the need for transitional support programs and supported accommodation programs. In doing so, it presents the contextual basis of this thesis, and emphasises the significance of continued research on returning citizens’ needs within an Australian, and more specifically, Tasmanian context.

Why do we need supported accommodation for recently released people?

The needs of returning citizens are highly complex (Cullen & Gendreau, 2000; Halsey, 2010; Halsey & Harris, 2011; Maruna & LeBel, 2003). Of particular importance is the provision of transitional and accommodation support for returning citizens. The following section will overview research on criminogenic needs, and how these needs are exacerbated by inadequate accommodation. It will then present a snapshot of the social disadvantage experienced by the Australian prison population, including their accommodation status pre- and post-release, the issues experienced by returning citizens, followed by the association between homelessness and criminal behaviour, as created by a lack of supported

accommodation. Lastly, it will discuss the need for transitional and accommodation support programs, and what these programs might look like.

Criminogenic needs

Crime and criminal behaviour stem from individual and environmental factors that need to be addressed prior to release to enhance reintegration into the community (Cullen & Gendreau, 2000; Maruna & LeBel, 2003). These factors include pro-offending attitudes and values, antisocial personality attributes, poor problem solving, substance abuse, high hostility and anger, and association with delinquent peers (Andrews & Bonta, 1998; Weatherburn, 2001). Low socioeconomic status, low educational skills, unemployment, poverty, and homelessness all influence criminal activity (Bradley et al., 2001; Cunneen & Luke, 2007; Payne et al., 2015). Chronic social disadvantage, poor physical and mental health, and high rates of substance misuse are experienced prior to imprisonment, and at even higher rates post-release, with high probability of recidivism, suicide, and fatal drug overdoses in the months after release (Kinner & Williams, 2006).

Criminogenic needs exacerbated by lack of accommodation

Lack of, inappropriate, or inadequate accommodation can exacerbate individual problems, such as substance misuse and mental health issues, that lead to crime and criminal behaviour (Baldry et al., 2003b). Kinner (2006) followed a cohort of incarcerated persons from custody into the community, and found that substance-related, mental health and psychosocial problems continued upon release. Many incarcerated persons had multi-faceted issues, such as impaired physical health, chronic illness, poor mental health and high levels of distress, and chronic social disadvantage and marginalisation (Kinner, 2006). Adequate post-release support is imperative, particularly in the period immediately following release (Lloyd et al.,

2013; McCrae, 2011), but needs remain unmet (Kinner, 2006). The relationship between accommodation instability, offending, and illicit drug use is complex and multi-faceted, but it is recognised that accommodation stability contributes to decreased offending and drug use (Willis, 2018). This is especially important considering the degree to which incarcerated people are disadvantaged and marginalised in such complex ways, and how this is exacerbated by the lack of available and stable accommodation.

Australia’s prison population – disadvantaged and marginalised

Incarcerated persons are overrepresented in low socioeconomic status populations, are amongst the most disadvantaged in society, and experience poverty and low educational attainment (Baldry et al., 2003b). Baldry et al. (2003b) stated that each time a person is incarcerated, their social and material resources, such as housing, are lost. Incarcerating and releasing already disadvantaged persons without adequate support perpetuated their already meagre social and economic resources, a cycle that began very quickly in their sample. Currently and previously incarcerated persons are highly disadvantaged compared to the general population in numerous aspects, such as employment, education, family and social relationships, and health (Willis, 2004). As such, they enter prison from significant social disadvantage, are institutionalised, and then released into stigmatisation, with a lack of social and life skills, lack of coping skills, lack of funds, and often debt (Willis, 2004). This disadvantage is particularly apparent when it comes to housing, or the lack thereof.

In comparison with the general population, incarcerated persons rely more heavily on public housing and renting from landlords and housing authorities (Baldry et al., 2003b). Baldry et al (2003b) found that, prior to incarceration, fewer incarcerated persons lived in a family owned home (24% compared to the general population’s 71%), and that more incarcerated persons rented from a private or public landlord (56% compared to 26%), relied

on housing authorities (44% compared to 20%), and lived in public housing (25% compared to 6%) compared to the general population. Furthermore, no Indigenous incarcerated persons in Baldry et al.’s (2003b) sample owned their own home prior to incarceration, compared to 38 per cent of the general Indigenous population. A substantial 18 per cent of the prison sample was homeless prior to incarceration, compared to one per cent of the general population. In addition, Kinner (2006) found that 19 per cent of males and 15 per cent of incarcerated females had no accommodation arrangement four weeks prior to their release. This research shows that incarcerated persons come from more marginalised arrangements prior to incarceration when compared to the general population, and are therefore less likely to have stable accommodation upon release.

Reintegration: What are the issues?

Returning citizens need accommodation, food and legitimate employment opportunities, as well as a level of dignity to show that they are valued members in the community (Halsey, 2010). There are numerous factors that work against formerly incarcerated persons, including unresolved substance dependence, trauma, and stigma. These factors all create social exclusion and make reintegration difficult. The skills and knowledge required in prison are vastly different to those required in society (Halsey, 2010), and it is erroneous at best to expect incarcerated persons to emerge from prison as mature, responsible, and rehabilitated citizens, fully capable of socialising (Halsey & Harris, 2011). It is recognised that throughcare and transitional support are highly effective and essential in addressing criminogenic needs, and assisting with reintegration and difficulties that may emerge upon release (McCrae, 2011). Programs provide a key opportunity to provide this throughcare and transitional support in ways that impact offending behaviour, and facilitate successful re-

entry, which lead to better and more functional lives for returning citizens, their families, and communities (Lowenkamp & Latessa, 2005).

Lack of supported accommodation post-release

Research shows that ongoing, supported accommodation is crucial in promoting stability and decreasing recidivism rates (Willis, 2018). Several studies have found a clear relationship between homelessness and recidivism (Baldry et al., 2003a; 2003b; 2006; Williams et al., 2012). Returning citizens who end up homeless or with unstable, unsuitable housing, experience social isolation and do not experience a sense of community or belonging (Baldry et al., 2006). The lack of affordable and secure housing is a primary factor contributing to social exclusion, and as such, people who are homeless are often excluded from the community, and lack support from family and friends. Social isolation can exacerbate problems with accommodation, employment, mental health, and offending behaviour (Willis, 2018), resulting in an endless cycle where persons are separated from social benefits. It has been argued that returning citizens are amongst the most socially excluded members of society (Jones-Finer & Nellis, 1998).

A large majority of people released from prison do not have suitable accommodation, and there is a lack of accessible pre-release information and support provided to secure accommodation (Baldry et al., 2003b; Willis, 2004). Particular sub-groups, such as people with mental health disorders or intellectual disabilities, young males serving short sentences, and single women with children, are more vulnerable and likely to end up without adequate housing (Baldry et al., 2003b; 2006). Poor pre-release arrangements result in inadequate, unsupported accommodation post-release, and this contributes to re-offending. Furthermore, having appropriate accommodation is a requirement for parole (Baldry et al., 2003a; McCrae, 2011). Williams et al. (2012) reported that 79 per cent of those who had been homeless prior

to incarceration were reconvicted within 12 months of release, compared with those who were not homeless (47%). Baldry et al. (2006) found that 50 per cent of their sample moved two or more times, with 16 per cent moving more than four times since their last interview. Of those who had not moved (50%), only 22 per cent had been reincarcerated after nine months, compared to 59 per cent of those who moved twice or more. The study reported that homelessness increased from 18 per cent prior to incarceration, to 21 per cent post-release, and found a significant relationship between homelessness and reincarceration (Baldry et al., 2006). One explanation for this association between homelessness and further engagement in criminal behaviour, is the inherent criminality of not having a roof over your head.

Homelessness is intrinsically correlated to criminal activity, and a review of international research reports that those who live their lives on the streets are more susceptible to committing public order offences and may find themselves targeted by police, because of perceived community safety issues or because homeless populations are more visible to street policing operations (Kirkwood & Richley, 2008). It can also lead to ‘survival offending’, such as shoplifting and squatting to meet basic needs (Payne et al., 2015). The stress accompanied by experiencing unstable housing may induce or exacerbate current mental health issues, causing individuals to self-medicate, and resorting to offending to support drug and alcohol use (Kirkwood & Richley, 2008; Payne et al., 2015). This may further be supported by Payne et al.’s (2015) study in which they found that their cohort of homeless detainees reported a recent history of contact with the police and criminal processing systems, as well as high rates of illicit drug and alcohol use.

All Australian jurisdictions have legislation that criminalises activities related to homelessness (such as trespassing, loitering, public indecency etc.), thus penalising the inherent nature of being homeless. Such legislation is not only counterproductive, but criminal processing systems are neither appropriate nor effective in addressing the root

causes of homelessness. The criminalisation of these activities fails to address individual needs and remedy systemic issues, and may further exacerbate the hardship and social exclusion experienced by marginalised individuals (Hughes, 2017). Legislation that targets begging, such as sections in the *Police Offences Act 1935* (Tas), disproportionately impact and penalise the most marginalised members of our society. The association between homelessness and prior contact with criminal processing systems highlights the importance of supported accommodation programs for returning citizens, as previously incarcerated persons who face homelessness are statistically more likely to reoffend.

So, why do we need these programs?

Rehabilitative and reintegrative programs provide an opportunity to positively impact offending behaviour through transitional support that facilitates successful re-entry, thus developing more functional lives for returning citizens, their families, and the wider community (Lowenkamp & Latessa, 2005). Having accommodation promotes stability and facilitates social inclusion. Transitional and housing support services reduce reoffending, thus directly benefitting clients, increasing community safety, and reducing criminal processing costs (Willis, 2018).

Reintegration programs are also cost-efficient. Social costs of imprisonment go far beyond actual incarceration costs, and include family dysfunction, loss of housing, and loss of income, which may result in welfare dependence (McCrae, 2011). Social costs do not only relate to incarcerated persons, but extend to their family and friends, with the impacts of having a parent incarcerated resulting in a less stable home life, the disruption of family environment, and the difficulty of maintaining familial bonds (La Vigne et al., 2008; Murray & Murray, 2010). Successful reintegration would as such facilitate relationships, which

would benefit the returning citizen’s family, thereby counteracting the negative impacts of parental incarceration.

Decreasing prison clientele would furthermore result in substantial savings for the government and would also alleviate risks experienced by both incarcerated persons and correctional staff in overcrowded prisons (Haney, 2006). Problems such as cell sharing, pairing incarcerated persons of different security levels, restricted recreation, and telephone availability, result in increased tensions between incarcerated persons which exacerbate the risk of violence and prison riots. This may result in increased stress among both incarcerated persons and correctional staff, which may lead to further degrading and harmful treatment of incarcerated persons thus aggravating the psychological consequences of imprisonment on both incarcerated persons and staff (Haney, 2006). As demonstrated in Haney’s (2006) literature review, overcrowded prisons equate to inadequate resources. This results in inadequate evaluation and screening of incarcerated persons upon induction, and insufficient rehabilitation, vocational training programs, and a lack of meaningful work during incarceration, which hampers reintegration success upon release. Transitional and accommodation programs are therefore needed to break the cycle of offending, and this benefits the individual, their families, and their communities, on both personal and financial levels.

What do reintegration programs look like?

Post-release support and accommodation services greatly reduce recidivism rates (Baldry et al, 2003a; 2003b; Borzycki & Baldry, 2003; Day et al., 2004; McCrae, 2011). Successful programs are intensive and adhere to the risk-needs-responsivity principle (Przybylski, 2008). The risk principle refers to how high-risk offenders benefit more from interventions than low-risk offenders. The needs principle states that programs must target multiple criminogenic

needs (such as, criminal attitudes, unstable living arrangements, lack of employment, and substance abuse) of high-risk offenders to be successful, and highlights the critical role of risk assessment. Lastly, responsivity expresses the importance of matching the offender’s learning style and personality with suitable staff characteristics and treatment approaches, to ensure responsivity to offender characteristics (such as, cognitive ability, motivation, age, and gender). Programs must occupy 40% to 70% of the client’s time, and last for three to nine months. They should employ positive reinforcement, rather than punishment, and focus on changing values that contribute to anti-social behaviour (Przybylski, 2008).

Programs have to be evidence-based (Lowenkamp & Latessa, 2005) and individual-centred. It is imperative that support is holistic, individually tailored, and perceived as helpful by returning citizens. A study by Baldry et al. (2006) found that only 18 per cent of those who received helpful support returned to prison, compared to 69 per cent of those who perceived their support as unhelpful. Furthermore, the support has to treat the returning citizen as a whole human being, focusing on strengths, rather than just treating perceived issues and deficits (Maruna & LeBel, 2003). The support has to commence whilst the person is incarcerated, to prepare them for release, and continue post-release (Borzycki & Baldry, 2006). Research has presented some key features, including identifying risks and needs of incarcerated persons, incorporating client input, and matching in-prison and post-release services and supports accordingly. Furthermore, there needs to be adequate funding to offer long-term throughcare programs (Borzycki & Baldry, 2006). Research suggests that programs which include throughcare and housing assistance, such as supported accommodation programs, are most likely to support successful reintegration and produce positive outcomes (Lutze, Rosky & Hamilton, 2013; Wright, Zhang, Farabee, & Bratz, 2013).

What do supported accommodation programs look like?

There is a need for specialised housing and post-release transitional throughcare in prison, and accommodation needs should be dealt with at induction to ensure that appropriate measures can be taken by staff and the incarcerated person prior to release (Baldry et al., 2003b). Research suggests that incarcerated persons should be permitted day release to attend housing inspections, and have access to services with individual-needs’ accommodation and transitional support, to facilitate housing upon release (Baldry et al., 2003b). Returning citizen-only accommodation should be diminished, as it may continue the stigmatisation of previously incarcerated persons and facilitate further institutionalisation, adding to the disconnect between returning citizens and the wider community (Baldry et al., 2003b).

It is recognised that supported accommodation is an important step in reintegration, but there is no best practice model for delivering accommodation services. Instead, research suggests the need for a flexible model based on a holistic approach centred around individual needs (Willis, 2018). As the goal is to achieve ongoing stability, and individuals differ in their needs, no specific timeframe has been stipulated (Willis, 2018). However, it is recognised that the first three months post-release is the most crucial support period (McCrae, 2011). According to Willis (2018), who conducted a review on supported housing for returning citizens, most accommodation programs are discussed in relation to mental health clients, but remain relevant to a range of client groups, including incarcerated persons. Supported housing, where clients live independently with access to flexible and individualised support services, assists with reintegration into the wider community (Leviton-Reid, Johnson & Miller, 2014) and contributes to less unlawful behaviour (Bean, Shafer & Glennon, 2013). A range of positive outcomes have been reported for persons in supported housing, including security, social inclusion, stability and control, and well-being, with reported feelings of independence, happiness, and self-worth (Leviton-Reid et al., 2014). Best

practice for the reintegration of returning citizens should therefore consist of supported accommodation paired with adequate transitional support, and as further argued by Parsell et al. (2015), housing and support services must be intertwined with socially inclusive services.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined criminogenic needs, post-release needs, the association between homelessness, or inadequate accommodation, and criminal behaviours, as well as demonstrated the need for transitional support programs with emphasis on accommodation support. Research suggests that returning citizens are a considerably high needs group, experiencing multifaceted and complex problems that can inhibit their reintegration into the wider community. A number of factors work against returning citizens upon release: finding accommodation; employment; managing mental health issues and substance dependence; and re-establishing relationships. This chapter has indicated that criminality is a result of social disadvantage, such as homelessness, poverty, low socioeconomic status, and low educational attainment. This implies structural, societal issues, related to housing, employment, education, and social isolation, which need to be addressed urgently. The chapter has also highlighted the importance of providing transitional support pre- and post-release, what said programs look like, and why they are needed. The following chapter will outline the qualitative design and methodology employed for this study, including descriptions and justifications for using a consultative, qualitative methodology of semi-structured interviewing to document the consequences of defunding a transitional supported accommodation program in Tasmania.

CHAPTER THREE

Research Methods

Introduction

Chapter two critically analysed the research literature around the criminogenic needs of, and risk factors for recidivism amongst, returning citizens. This chapter showed how transitional support is integral to a person’s reintegration upon release as well established in existing research (Baldry et al., 2003a; 2003b; Borzycki & Baldry, 2003; Day et al., 2004; Lowenkamp & Latessa, 2015; McCrae, 2011), and in particular the need for supported accommodation as a core transition program for returning citizens. As such, this study focused on a Tasmanian case study where a successful supported accommodation, reintegrative program (the Reintegration for Ex-Offenders’ program), that provided transitional support and accommodation to returning citizens in Tasmania, was suddenly defunded and removed in 2015 (outlined in Chapter One of this thesis). To document the consequences of this defunding, this study conducted interviews with people closely associated with the REO program to answer two core research questions:

1. According to people closely associated with the Reintegration for Ex-Offenders’ program, what were the consequences of the defunding this program?
 - On current and formerly incarcerated persons?
 - On service providers?
2. According to people closely associated with the Reintegration for Ex-Offenders’ program, what factors affect the sustainability of reintegration programs?
 - External support (funding)

- Community perceptions

These research questions were designed as a starting point in deriving an interview schedule that would elicit data that could make crucial contributions to the Tasmanian – and arguably, national – reintegration environment. By exploring the above questions from the perspective of persons involved in the REO program, this research has the potential to: 1) understand the importance of transitional support, the impacts of removing support services, and the consequences of intermittent funding for support programs; and 2) provide recommendations on improving support strategies and facilitating the successful integration of returning citizens.

Using a consultative qualitative approach to document defunding consequences

To address the aforementioned questions, and to document the aftermath of the dissolution of this program through the voices of service providers and persons involved with the Reintegration for Ex-Offenders’ program, this study employed a qualitative approach to collect and analyse data. A qualitative approach ensures that data is approached from an exploratory perspective to gain further insight and knowledge without set assumptions, and to explore individual experiences to describe a phenomenon (Berg & Lune, 2017; Ormston, Spencer, Barnard & Snape, 2013). This is different to the parameters of a quantitative approach that focuses on generalising across large data sets and statistically confirming or rejecting a set hypothesis. A qualitative approach was therefore adopted, as the study does not have a set hypothesis, and to instead let the research questions shape the research and elicit rich and detailed data (Ormston et al., 2013).

Given that the research was dealing with a potentially sensitive topic, and was specifically focused on a case study of program discontinuation, the research was focused through a consultative approach. Initial conversations with people involved with REO

indicates that Tasmania has experienced a high turnover of programs due to lack of recurrent funding and concerns about the impacts of a continuous program churn. Program churn here refers to the application of funding a program for a limited time, defunding said program, and reinstituting a new program some time after the defunding of the first program. It was also evident that rapport building was crucial and speaking with key stakeholders about the approach to be used was important if the research process was going to have buy-in from the people involved with REO.

As such, the researcher conducted consultative conversations with key people involved with REO to discuss the methodological approach before gaining ethical clearance. As participation is a crucial determinant of research outcomes (Braun & Clarke, 2013), the recruitment of participants for this study depended on The Salvation Army’s generous cooperation and contribution. The organisation’s centrality in delivering the REO program, and their history of assisting returning citizens, was the basis for approaching The Salvation Army for the purpose of this research. Initial contact was made with The Salvation Army in late 2017, to discuss the parameters of the REO program and the benefits of conducting this research. Following this meeting, an overview of the program and its success was provided, and the organisations’ readiness to assist in participation recruitment was noted. Continuing conversations with key workers noted different issues they thought would emerge and that interviews were the most suitable way to explore questions about the consequences.

Using semi-structured interviews

A semi-structured interviewing approach was employed as it was assumed that further, important questions would arise during interviews, and that others might be omitted due to interviewees providing answers while addressing another question – thus requiring a flexible approach rather than a predetermined, more structured list of questions (Berg & Lune, 2017;

Noaks & Wincup, 2004). Furthermore, different participants had different areas of expertise, some of which were unknown until the interview commenced, which resulted in each interview being a unique conversation rather than following a set path. A semi-structured approach allowed for flexibility, thus enabling further exploration and clarifications as needed. Berg and Lune (2017, p.69) note, “[i]nstead of assuming that our questions mean the same thing to all subjects, we explore the meaning that each subject brings to or discovers in the questions”. These concepts underpinned all the interviews, where each participant constructed their own meaning to the questions and as such differed in their replies. As such, having adaptability built into the semi-structured interview schedule allowed the researcher to deviate from the interview schedule (Berg & Lune, 2017) and this was imperative in eliciting richer data from participants.

To ensure the research was methodologically rigorous, it was imperative that the study adhered to credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability criteria (Schwandt, Lincoln & Guba, 2007). As suggested by Guion, Diehl, and McDonald (2011), data triangulation was employed to check and establish validity, by categorising the participants into groups: 1) those directly involved with the REO program (e.g. workers); and 2) those who had contact with incarcerated persons through their employment (e.g. public servants). This triangulation was employed to look for outcomes agreed upon by both groups to enhance the study’s validity (Guion et al., 2011; Schwandt et al., 2007). Transferability – the findings’ applicability to future reintegration programs and policies – can be achieved through descriptive data, which allows others to judge the degree of fit. Confirmability – the degree to which the results are derived from the data, and whether they can be confirmed by others (Tobin & Begley, 2004) – can be achieved through triangulation and a reflective research journal, both of which have been employed in this study.

Participant recruitment and sampling

Participation recruitment for this project was particularly assisted by the REO program’s former team leader, who provided a means of initial contact with potential participants. This included verbally informing potential participants of the research project, identifying those who expressed interest in participating in the research, and subsequently releasing their contact details. With this assistance, the researcher could contact potential participants directly to provide them with information sheets and formal invitations to participate in the project, as well as make arrangements for an interview if they chose to participate.

In total, eleven participants were recruited during a recruitment period from July to October 2018. At times, the process of securing an interview demanded persistence with cancellations and non-responses, thus requiring resourcefulness and inventiveness in approaching other participants. The team leader’s assistance was crucial in securing these interviews. However, it should be noted that interviewees were willing to nominate other potential participants. This was especially crucial as the number of people working closely with REO was very small. Working closely with the team leader and building trust with key people that worked closely with REO meant that the opportunity to participate in the research was met with enthusiasm and support at all levels – from team leaders, workers, other service providers, and public servants. The research participants were not offered any reimbursement for their time, but close consultation meant that all people that worked closely with REO were eager to be involved in the research and share their time and knowledge. Furthermore, all participants were keen to receive the results at the end of the study, and indeed, many have continuously communicated throughout the process.

Participants were selected via a snowball method, where the key service provider (The Salvation Army) was asked to recommend others involved in the Reintegration for Ex-Offenders’ program. The study also worked through a purposive sampling method, to ensure

that certain types of persons with specialised knowledge were included in the study (Berg & Lune, 2017). This combined purposive and snowball sampling method was employed to generate a narrow, focused set of data that elaborated detailed insight and in-depth understanding (Berg & Lune, 2017; Patton, 2002) of the specifics of the REO program. As the participants were selected because they were closely associated with the REO program, this ensured that the interview data produced a detailed picture of the issues related to the research questions being addressed. The sample was built up through the networks of participants, and participants were asked to identify others who might wish to take part in the study. Invitations to participate came from either existing participants or the researcher. The key contact at The Salvation Army was keen to be involved and assist with providing contact details of other participants. This key contact also provided publicly available email addresses of potential participants to the researcher, had conversations with potential participants to inform them of the study, and passed the researcher's contact details on to them. Potential participants were then emailed an expression of interest that introduced the researcher and the project, and invited them to participate in semi-structured interviews at a time and place convenient to them. The email emphasised that, although their information was forwarded to the researcher by another organisation, they were under no obligation to participate in the project, that participation was strictly voluntary and confidential, and that they could withdraw by a specific due date without comment or penalty. The email also included an information sheet, outlining the scope of the study, and what was hoped to be achieved through the research project.

The participant sample

Due to the small number of people involved in the REO program, the overall pool of potential participants for this study to draw on was very limited. The final sample consisted

of eleven participants, recruited primarily through a purposive, snowball sample initiated by the key contact at The Salvation Army, and continued by interviewees. As noted above, service providers involved in the Reintegration for Ex-Offenders’ program were invited to participate by email. Eight of the eleven participants were recruited via snowballing method, and the other three were sourced through their public involvement in the Reintegration for Ex-Offenders’ program. Four were directly involved in the REO program as supervisors or workers, one was involved in its precursor the Post-Release Options Program (PROP), and the rest were either directly or indirectly involved in REO through the referral process and/or working with its clients in other capacities. Although the sample size may be viewed as somewhat modest, the sample possessed information-rich data (Braun & Clarke, 2013) which was invaluable to the study. They had the most concentrated knowledge of the program because they were most closely related to the program. By engaging with a small group of participants, a more personalised, and in-depth understanding of their knowledge was achieved, which would have been difficult with a larger sample.

A further issue was time constraints related with study for a Master’s thesis. The researcher originally planned to approach and interview a maximum of fifteen participants for the study. In attracting eleven participants, the data collection process was sufficient to achieve informational saturation, referring here to a complete and accurate representation of the topic (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Green et al., 2007), which enabled a detailed analysis of the data. All participants were over the age of 18. Research participants were invited to expand on knowledge around the REO program’s operations and success, and to understand the consequences of its defunding from a range of perspectives, including non-government organisations, government departments, and other public servants. Various service providers were approached in the first instance, but these will not be named in this thesis due to the

very small number of organisations involved and the potential identifiability of these organisations and their workers.

The interviews

Eleven interviews were conducted over a three-month data collection period, commencing in July 2018 and concluding in October 2018. The semi-structured interviews lasted for an average of forty-five minutes, and ranged from twenty-five minutes to an hour and thirty minutes. Eight interviews were a one-off, one-on-one interview. Two of the eleven interviews were conducted with the same participant, consisting of two one and half-hour interviews, and one interview included two participants. Interviews took place at a time and place nominated as convenient to the participant, usually their place of work. Given the participants’ detailed knowledge and varying personal opinions of REO’s dissolution and its consequences, this one-on-one approach was considered the most appropriate means for data collection, providing a secure environment that assured confidentiality and anonymity, and elicited in-depth information (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006).

Following pre-interview introductions and discussions detailing the research purposes, the participants signed a consent form. These introductions were imperative to build rapport by allowing participants to ask questions about the project and check their understanding of what they were consenting to by being involved in the study. Establishing rapport is essential to build trust and respect for the interviewee and the interviewer, promoting a safe and comfortable environment for participants to share their personal experiences and opinions (Braun & Clarke, 2013; DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). With the permission of participants, all interviews were digitally audio-recorded for transcription to facilitate thematic analysis and interpretation. Audio-recording further allows the researcher to focus fully on the interview rather than note taking, which may enhance rapport building

(Jacob & Furgerson, 2012). All interviews were de-identified and assigned an interview number prior to transcription. The transcripts were checked by the researcher before analysis for any specific remarks/names/phrases that may identify them or another person, and participants were given an opportunity to review their interview transcripts prior to commencement of data analysis.

Addressing the research questions outlined above, interviews worked from a semi-structured interview schedule (see Appendix D), comprised of open-ended questions and prompts that allowed participants to communicate as much information as possible without risking over-prompting and potential bias from the interviewer (Schwandt et al., 2007; Tobin & Begley, 2004). The open-ended question framework allowed the respondents to talk in-depth, using their own words, which added information that the researcher had not thought of. The interview schedule focused on three key areas: 1) The REO program’s importance in providing support and facilitating reintegration; 2) the consequences of its defunding on service providers and returning citizens; and 3) the consequences of not being able to secure recurrent funding, and thus experiencing a program churn – on service providers and returning citizens. Conducting semi-structured interviews with people who worked closely with the REO program enabled the researcher to gain a comprehensive understanding of the problems faced by service providers, returning citizens, and the consequences that emerged as a result of defunding the REO program.

Ethical considerations

Research relies on the notion of *do no harm* (Berg & Lune, 2017; Braun & Clarke, 2013), and this meant that the researcher needed to be aware of a range of important ethical considerations when conducting research, and in particular when conducting interviews. The vulnerability of research participants, attitudes of criminal justice institutions, corporate and

state bodies and their positions, and the potentially sensitive nature of the topic, must be taken into consideration as core ethical concerns (Israel, 2004). Ethical issues can be multifaceted, relating to individuals, organisations, and communities (Noaks & Wincup, 2004). As such, it is imperative that participants are well informed about the study and the different ethical issues related with the study, including the study purpose, aims and possible outcomes, how their participation fits into the study, that their personal information remains confidential and private, and that participation is voluntary (Berg & Lune, 2017; Braun & Clarke, 2013; Israel, 2004; Noaks & Wincup, 2004). It is essential that participation does not result in physical, psychological, financial, emotional, or occupational harm, and that there are no ramifications for interviewees.

The research team assessed this research project as low risk and developed and submitted low risk ethical clearance documentation to the UTAS Human Research Ethics Committee (see Appendix A). To facilitate understanding about the study generally, and the ethical issues related with the study, interviewees were provided with an information sheet (see Appendix B), and asked to sign a consent form (see Appendix C) prior to participation. It was ensured that all participants were aware that their consent could be withdrawn at any time and that they may decide not to respond to questions without consequence. In addition, the information sheet and pre-interview discussions highlighted and reaffirmed the strict confidentiality of the participants’ disclosure and identities. Following interviews, all audio-data was transcribed with the omission of real names or other identifying information, and the data was securely stored and disposed of. It was recognised that three core ethical issues relate to this particular study.

The first key ethical issue identified in the study was participants making critical comments about a program which was managed by the organisation they were employed by. As participants were employed by service providers, were divulging sensitive information

and could potentially be making critical comments about their employing organisations, service providers, departments, and government, the research team recognised that this may cause personal discomfort. This is because it puts the participants in a compromising position where they could feel that their comments might impact on the security of their current role. As such, it was crucial to ensure that the anonymity of participants was protected, and their interview comments were confidential.

The second key ethical issue is the political context that underpins most research (Israel, 2004), and therefore requires the researcher to remain objective. It was recognised that the defunding of the Reintegration for Ex-Offenders’ program had a political context, and that the government play a role in providing funding to non-government organisations. As such, the researcher acknowledged the potential broadcast of political views and critical comments from participants, but was also mindful that the study’s outputs may cause objections from those within the political purview of reintegration and justice.

The third core ethical issue relates to the very small number of people associated closely with the REO program and potential re-identifiability. Following the words of Braun and Clarke (2013, p.64), ‘[i]n situations where participants are members of a relatively small community, issues of ethics and anonymities require extra thought’, it is acknowledged that the pool of people supporting the reintegration of previously incarcerated people in Tasmania, and people involved in the REO program, is small. As individuals may therefore be re-identifiable despite all measures taken, it is important to note that these are the personal views expressed by individuals, and not organisations or departments.

Coding, analysis, and interpretation

Aiming to develop an understanding of post-release support needs, and the consequences of removing a transitional support program, the data analysis was directed by two key questions:

1) What were the key consequences of defunding the REO program on service providers and returning citizens, and 2) What do future programs require to successfully support the reintegration of returning citizens? The qualitative data generated throughout the study was analysed using thematic analysis. Once interviews were audio recorded, they were transcribed as a Word document. As noted by Noaks and Wincup (2004), transcription provides the opportunity for research immersion, and reflection of interviews and emerging themes. The transcriptions were then analysed using a process of thematic analysis to identify key patterns in the data.

Qualitative thematic analysis provides a flexible approach to identifying recurrent patterns in the literature and data, and allows findings to be methodically identified and organised under thematic headings (Boyatzis, 1998; Braun & Clarke, 2013). Employing an inductive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2013), this study approached data analysis without preconceived theoretical ideas about what the consequences would be, for instance. Rather, an inductive approach meant analysis allowed the themes to emerge from the narratives of the participants and the research questions guided the identification of the main themes (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Ormston et al., 2013). The aforementioned research questions drove the initial coding of core themes in the interview transcripts, and guided the more fine-grained, detailed analysis of sub-themes in the data.

The thematic analysis process involved a phased approach. The first phase of coding the data involved printing the transcriptions and using highlighter pens to highlight the sections of data discussing the consequences reported by participants. This process identified core patterns within the data, and grouped the data based on the overarching research questions. The second phase of coding then categorised the data by identifying groups impacted by REO’s defunding and the broader pattern of program churn, and by distinguishing the consequences relevant to each group. This analysis revealed more specific

sub-themes around the consequences of defunding a support program on incarcerated persons, service providers, and the wider community, including issues such as: alluding to gaps in services; loss of relationships and trust; loss of staff experience; health implications; increased rates of recidivism; and increased costs. Upon completion of the phases of coding the data, the researcher worked with the supervisor of the project to check the coded data. Sections of the coded data were also coded and thematised by the project supervisor to ensure inter-coder reliability. The coding of the data was also checked by the project supervisor in terms of themes emerging across the participant groups.

Conclusion

This chapter detailed the consultative, qualitative methodology employed to conduct this research project. It demonstrated the suitability of a qualitative research approach due to the exploratory nature of the study, and justified the employment of semi-structured interviews to gather data from people closely associated with the REO program. The chapter also outlined the purposive, snowball sampling method adopted for recruitment of participants who were closest to the REO program to ensure concentrated information was collated about the program from core people involved. Finally, the chapter outlined the key ethical considerations related to the project and the thematic analysis techniques applied to interpret the data. The following chapter reports the core themes from the analysis of the interview data.

CHAPTER FOUR

‘It left a huge hole’: the consequences of defunding REO

Introduction

The impacts are too big. It’d take forever to talk about. – Participant 5

The following chapter will discuss the internal and external consequences of The Reintegration for Ex-Offenders’ (REO) program’s dissolution. External consequences in this chapter refer to gaps in service provision, the loss of a specialised service, and social consequences such as an increasing prison population and the significant costs associated with incarceration. Internal consequences in this chapter relate to the individual consequences experienced by service providers and previously and currently incarcerated persons, ranging from smaller consequences such as an organisation’s reputation ‘It looks bad on them that they’ve lost a program, even though they had nothing to do with it’ (Participant 11), to irrevocably devastating as described below:

Just taking away a program at the end of the day was enough to actually push at least one of our people over the line. And he hung himself from the doorhandle in his unit. Jail style. – Participant 2

The initial months following release are a crucial time for support (McCrae, 2011), as they may constitute high probabilities of recidivism, suicide, and fatal drug overdoses (Kinner & Williams, 2006). This initial support is also important to ensure that returning citizens receive

assistance with accommodation, food, and legitimate employment opportunities (Halsey, 2010), as it is recognised that lack of accommodation is a contributing factor to reoffending (Baldry et al., 2003b; Payne et al., 2015). It is therefore acknowledged that post-release support and accommodation services offer a reduction in recidivism rates (Baldry et al., 2003a; Borzycki & Baldry, 2003; Day et al., 2004; McCrae, 2011). This chapter explores the internal and external consequences of defunding the REO program: the loss of a specialised service; the social consequences; and the consequences for incarcerated persons and service providers, summarised through the words of one participant: ‘It is a real shame, and it is still a loss, and I still think we feel it today’ (Participant 8).

Gap in services

When the REO program was defunded, then Minister for Human Services, Jacquie Petrusma, stated that Housing Connect would take over the accommodation component of REO (Billings, 2015; Smiley, 2015). Prior to its dissolution, it was emphasised by numerous people that REO was not simply an accommodation service, but also provided transitional support, leaving people concerned that Housing Connect would not be able to continue to provide the specific support required for this cohort (Billings, 2015; Parliament of Tasmania, 2015; Smiley, 2015). It became evident throughout this study that a significant gap was left by the defunding of the REO program, where services were no longer provided to returning citizens:

With nothing provided, no routine, nothing. All of a sudden, they just have to do it on their own. – Participant 9

Participants highlighted this gap by saying that ‘[n]othing was happening’ (Participant 10) in the rehabilitation space. What was most problematic in the comments of the participants was how, even though the program had ceased to operate due to defunding, many of the workers continued to assist returning citizens on a voluntary basis so that people would not be left completely without support. They were effectively doing their role without pay because they cared about the outcomes of the people they were supporting during the life of the program:

... when the life or the activity period of the project was coming to an end, people were left high and dry. And it was sometimes only through the goodwill of people supporting them, following the conclusion of the funding, on a voluntary basis - out of the goodness of their hearts. – Participant 4

The complexity of the gap left by the defunding of the REO program was captured well by the comments of one participant that specifically highlighted loss of relationships as a major concern:

The difficulties when a program like REO gets defunded, and even if it is, I guess, reconstituted in a slightly different format later, there has not only been a gap in terms of providing that support for people who would have been able to access it, but also the relationships lapse a little bit, the continuity lapses, the capacity to strategically plan a program is lost. – Participant 1.

With formerly paid staff members stepping in on a voluntary basis to continue support for returning citizens, and the loss of significant relationships, it is evident that participants experienced a significant loss as a result of the defunding of the program,

something which was further emphasised in comments from participants in relation to loss of service.

The loss of a specialised service

The REO program assisted returning citizens with their accommodation needs prior to release, but also provided holistic transitional support to address integral life skills such as budgeting, education, and employment through an individual case plan (McCrae, 2011; The Salvation Army, n.d. a). It was established that ‘REO wasn’t just bricks and mortar’ (Participant 10), but ‘a specialised service’ (Participant 8). The importance of a specialised service was summarised by one participant:

... it is a very specialised service. Prisoners have specialised needs, because prisoners – generally speaking – have mental health issues, often have poor physical health, they have sometimes chronic behavioural issues. – Participant 7

Several participants referred to the specialised service that the Reintegration for Ex-Offenders’ program provided to returning citizens, and the ‘lack of expertise in the area’ (Participant 2) since its dissolution. This lack of specialised services meant that ‘prisoners went into a pool where they had to compete for time’ (Participant 3), which ultimately meant ‘that if you are a prisoner, you are down the bottom of the list’ (Participant 7). Even though Housing Connect had been tasked with housing returning citizens, handing this to Housing Connect was criticised heavily by participants because this was a service for the general public, not specifically returning citizens, and participants suggested this service did not have the capacity to provide the services needed for this specialised group. Housing Connect ‘is for everybody, and to expect this population to fit into that somehow, it is unrealistic’

(Participant 8). Housing Connect was therefore not equipped to replace this specialised service and work with the cohort:

... there was a great reluctance for any of the Housing Connect providers to actually work with people who were exiting prison. A) because it wasn't the cohort that they normally worked with, b) because it was a specialised area, and c) because there is a risk associated with it. – Participant 2

There are so many clients now because it is not just the REO program with their little bunch of people just from prison, it is now everybody. So, they're all thrown in together. - Participant 11

This further meant that ‘that real classical transitional support was lacking’ (Participant 9). The lack of ‘specialist knowledge to work with this particular group’ (Participant 9) and support was summarised by one participant:

It is just crazy. There is no support there. Yes, they got the house – well done - they have a place to live – terrific – but what support? Nothing. - Participant 11

It is evident that the loss of a specialised service, tailored to meet the needs of returning citizens, resulted in a forgotten cohort, who therefore did not have access to housing or transitional support, which further lead to unmet needs as expressed by participants below.

Unmet needs

During this study, it became evident that the defunding of the Reintegration for Ex-Offenders’ program left a significant gap in services, and that ‘most inmates that needed that

service, they were just lost basically’ (Participant 9). The interviewees emphasised that ‘people aren’t getting their needs met’ (Participant 5) and that ‘they are still looking for that support’ (Participant 11). The fact that the REO program was not replaced with a specialised service, but instead assigned returning citizens to an accommodation provider who did not possess knowledge about this particular cohort and their needs, meant that people were not getting their needs met:

So, the people that would ordinarily need the intensive, or really specifically tailored, support on release would just go in with everybody else through the same – and they just fell through the cracks... – Participant 8

...REO was able to make those connections, but without them. Wow. There was a whole, huge group of people with really, really serious issues who were missing out completely. – Participant 9

It is evident in the comments of participants that unmet needs, due to program discontinuation, was a core concern for people involved with REO. This, however, was not just a time-specific moment when the program discontinued. Participants identified that this had an ongoing impact for service providers.

Participants talked at some length about how ‘quite a few inmates after – even years after REO left – would ask about it’ (Participant 8), and that service providers ‘still get calls from prisoners just coming out and they just want to know if I can help them’ (Participant 11). The REO program’s importance and effectiveness in meeting people’s needs can be demonstrated by people’s propensity to return to service providers ‘just to debrief, to download some things that are going on in [person’s] life and will reflect on some of the

things that are happening for [person]’ (Participant 2), and that service providers ‘still talk to these people... [Person] just called in the other day’ (Participant 5). The REO program provided a specialised service that assisted with both accommodation needs and transitional support. As highlighted by participants, the specialised knowledge required to work with incarcerated persons and returning citizens was exclusive to the REO program, and was lost when Housing Connect took over the accommodation aspect. The defunding of REO ‘left a huge hole’ (Participant 9) and saw the loss of a specialised service without replacement, resulting in unmet needs for incarcerated persons and returning citizens, as demonstrated by their repeated efforts to reach out to previous service providers, and continuous inquiries about the Reintegration for Ex-Offenders’ program.

Consequences for previously and currently incarcerated persons

And the people who are suffering at the end of the day are the clients. And that’s it. Not the ones in Parliament, they’re OK. It’s the ones sitting at home trying to make ends meet who need support. – Participant 11

The consequences for currently and previously incarcerated persons ranged from social consequences, like a lack of support generally, a loss of trust, and social exclusion, to physical consequences, like a lack of housing and, as noted in Chapter One, suicide of returning citizens. This section provides an in-depth discussion of the varied consequences for incarcerated persons, and the implications of defunding a successful reintegration program. The key consequences noted by participants included: lack of support; lack of housing; staying incarcerated; recidivism post-release; loss of trust; lack of hope and options; and social exclusion.

Lack of support

One of the first things noted by participants was the lack of support since the dissolution of the REO program, and how that impacted current incarcerated persons that ‘would get out without that sort of support’ (Participant 9) as now ‘there’s simply not the rehabilitation and the relevant support’ (Participant 5). On occasions, people ‘had somewhere to go, but they needed that extra sort of support, a person walking with them... And that’s kind of missing’ (Participant 9). The lack of support for currently incarcerated persons since REO’s dissolution was highlighted by participants:

So current inmates don’t get the help that they require... They just don’t get it. –

Participant 5

And the clients that could have been helped, but weren’t. – Participant 11

As demonstrated in Chapter Two, transitional support is imperative to facilitate returning citizens’ reintegration, thereby reducing recidivism rates (Baldry et al., 2003a; Borzycki & Baldry, 2003; Day et al., 2004; McCrae, 2011). Thus, reoffending is more probable without support, and it can be argued that ‘...the lack of support when somebody gets out – like a REO type of thing – that certainly doesn’t help [with someone reoffending]’ (Participant 8). It was recognised that release and parole ‘is already hard enough’ (Participant 8), that being released after a long period of incarceration ‘is kind of a big shock’ (Participant 10). Participants emphasised that this support was important because ‘the stress of actually applying for parole and the impending release is sometimes more, causes more anxiety than perhaps getting sent to jail in the first place does’ (Participant 2). Reintegration success is contingent on support and opportunities particularly for vulnerable people: ‘prisoners are

vulnerable, returning to the community requires support if they are to become successful, returning citizens’ (Participant 7). If support and opportunities are not provided, ‘common sense tells you that you are going to get worse outcomes’ (Participant 7). It is evident that the transitional support was lacking after the Reintegration for Ex-Offenders’ program was defunded, due to a lack of specialised services. However, the argument for its dissolution was that Housing Connect would acquire the accommodation aspect of the program, thereby making it a ‘fair and equitable’ system which would prioritise ‘those most in need, not who they are’ (Smiley, 2015). Interestingly, this was not how this decision was received by people involved with REO, with significant evidence that housing was not provided by Housing Connect to previously incarcerated people.

Lack of housing

Despite promises that Housing Connect would ensure a fair approach that would prioritise people in need, a Right to Information request showed that in the year after the Reintegration for Ex-Offender’s program’s dissolution, 109 incarcerated persons had applied for housing, but none were allocated a house (Tenant’s Union of Tasmania, 2016). This was further demonstrated by this study, with participants stating that ‘I have not known any prisoners to have been housed by Housing Connect’ (Participant 7) and ‘no one had been housed since REO was defunded’ (Participant 6). REO’s success in providing housing and the gap since its dissolution was illustrated well by one participant:

When it was defunded it meant that quite a few number of inmates had no access to any accommodation services, or they were scratching around looking for them.

– Participant 10

The passing over of the task of housing incarcerated people to Housing Connect did not necessarily translate to incarcerated persons not being offered houses. In fact, ‘through that process, about three of four that[sic] have been offered properties’ (Participant 9). However, the houses offered were deemed unsuitable, due to location and proximity to supervision: ‘some of the properties that were being offered were on the east coast, and Parole doesn’t have any offices over there, and most of them would be knocked back, so we weren’t getting properties there either’ (Participant 9). Participant comments suggest that there are complexities that make housing suitable, and Housing Connect was not able to accommodate the subtleties of housing previously incarcerated people. As such, despite good intentions to find and provide properties, Housing Connect has not managed to successfully house any previously incarcerated persons since 2015.

The complexities for incarcerated persons to access housing can be seen in Housing Tasmania’s policy for *Tenants and applicants in prison* (2018). It clearly states that incarcerated persons can complete an Expression of Interest six weeks before their release date, but will not be offered a home until after they have been released and assessed by Housing Connect. This was further highlighted by The Parole Board Tasmania’s 2015-2016 Annual Report (2016), which stated that while Housing Connect does provide an alternative, an application does not become active until post-release - resulting in the Parole Board being unable to consider an application for a prospective candidate. This not only affects parole eligibility, as the Parole Board ‘can’t parole someone who has nowhere to go’ (Participant 10), meaning that incarcerated persons serve their full sentence and the issues relating to that – such as contributing to prisons reaching capacity, as well as being released without any support. It also means that incarcerated persons risk being released into nothingness, thereby making them more vulnerable to experience homelessness and ‘just go back to what they did before’ (Participant 11). Upon release, the returning citizen has 14 days to contact Housing

Connect, upon which their application will be backdated to the date the original Expression of Interest form was completed. However, considering the current state of Tasmania’s housing climate and that the waiting list for those requiring priority housing has blown out to 72 weeks (Humphries & Whitson, 2018), it may well be argued that incarcerated persons were not acquiring the assistance they required, and did not get access to housing.

Participants discussed how this in turn led to a loss of trust in the systems that were set up to support previously incarcerated people.

Loss of trust

One of the reasons that the Reintegration for Ex-Offenders’ program was so successful was because of the people involved with the program (particularly the workers) and their ability to build relationships and trust with returning citizens. Trust was highlighted as an integral part of the support work as service providers ‘can’t move forward without it’ (Participant 5).

Developing this trust with individuals who have ‘been let down time and time again’ (Participant 8) and therefore do not ‘have a great deal of trust in people’ and ‘a complete lack of trust in the system’ (Participant 5) ‘takes time’ (Participant 3). The importance of relationships and trust was made evident in the comments of participants who stated that ‘once they trust you, then it can be all talk, and you can help people more’ (Participant 11). Participants spoke of building relationships over a long period of time to ‘find out about their families’ (Participant 2) and building trust through reliability and dependability: ‘what we said we would do, we did’ (Participant 5), including providing returning citizens with ‘all the necessary things’, such as food, and ‘all the furniture they needed’ (Participant 11). The consequences of defunding the REO program resulted in a ‘breakdown of trust within the actual community that [service providers] were trying to service’ (Participant 5) and a lack of ‘faith in organisations’, ‘belief’, and significant ‘cynicism’ (Participant 9):

The things that I thought about after that were what message are we sending to people that are finally trying to change their attitudes towards trusting us? Those particular people. They aren't interested when I say to them I haven't got the money to help you anymore. They hear I don't want to help you anymore. There's a very big difference in those two things... That's the biggest implication I saw, is that we broke down trust that took years to build – Participant 5

This is important to take into consideration, as effective transitional support cannot be provided without trust, thereby impacting an individual's propensity to apply positive change in their life, which would ultimately enhance community safety. This lack of trust has flow-on effects when combined with the apparent lack of options for previously incarcerated people, and the emergence in turn of a lack of hope.

Without options and hope

A theme that was highlighted by all participants was the lack of options for currently incarcerated persons and returning citizens, and the feelings of hopelessness that arose after the defunding of the REO program:

It's like giving someone hope and then taking it away. – Participant 11

So, when something like this isn't an option anymore, that just feeds that doubt in other people, the doubt that they can do something about it, or that they have some sort of control over their lives. – Participant 8

This hopelessness was preceded by the notion that incarcerated persons struggle ‘at the best of times to think that the world is a fair place’ (Participant 8), and that there is an initial lack of trust on their behalf due to having ‘been in contact with NGOs and State services all their lives and basically been failed’ (Participant 5). The removal of the REO program resulted in a lack of ‘alternatives for those in the position of having nothing’ (Participant 10), which was further corroborated by almost all participants. Participants mentioned ‘the helplessness and hopelessness’ (Participant 8) that emerged when incarcerated individuals realised that services were removed, and they ask themselves and workers: ‘What now? I am stuffed now’ (Participant 8). This finding of being without options and hope was particularly interesting when applied to a cohort that ‘like having control over their own life’ and ‘like to be able to do what they want, when they want, and make their own choices’ (Participant 8). One can presume that a lack of pre- and post-release options in a prison system where ‘you’re told what to do’ (Participant 11) can exacerbate an already pressured environment. This was confirmed by one participant: ‘behaviour can sometimes go a bit off because if people feel that they are optionless, they get scared and angry’ (Participant 8). This tied into remaining in the system, ‘because there [are] no other options for you’ (Participant 11), but lack of options and opportunities upon release also contributes to people going ‘into how they can survive’ (Participant 5). This was further compounded by how incarcerated persons would often end up remaining in the system for longer than required, and were released without support.

Remaining in the system

It is a requirement to ‘have a release address to go to before you can be released’ (Participant 11), which inevitably meant that, after the defunding of REO, people who were otherwise eligible for parole were ‘languishing in prison, needlessly languishing in prison’ (Participant 2) due to a lack of accommodation:

And they would spend a lot more time in jail, when all things being equal they were ready for parole, apart from the fact they had nowhere to go. – Participant 10

Without support and ‘anybody trying to line up properties for them, they just stay incarcerated’ (Participant 3), which not only meant that people remain incarcerated when they could ‘do really well on parole with that extra support – the counselling, the drug testing, and the learning to manage in the community, which is hard’ (Participant 8). It also meant that ‘if somebody goes straight to release, with no post-sentence order like probation or parole, they get nothing’ (Participant 8). In addition, ‘the continued deprivation of liberty for people who are otherwise eligible for parole’ (Participant 7) should be considered an important and grave consequence. The flow-on effects of remaining in the system will be demonstrated throughout this analysis, with emphasis on prison overcrowding and associated incarceration costs compared to the cost of providing transitional support services. As argued, housing is an imperative factor to reintegration, and it was highlighted as ‘critical to a successful application for parole’ (Parole Board of Tasmania, 2016). The consequence of not having access to accommodation was perfectly summarised by these participants:

But often what is happening there is that the catalyst there is the lack of housing. That is not a good enough reason to keep some poor soul in [prison] that could actually do really well on parole with that extra support... So yeah, the housing thing is bringing people unstuck and it is not fair. – Participant 8

It is disgraceful that people are deprived of their liberty when they ought to be released on parole, because they have nowhere to live. And that is the fault of this

government. Now, to keep people in prison simply because they have nowhere to live, is unconscionable... – Participant 7

The comments of participants demonstrate well the emergence of a serious human rights issue upon the defunding of the REO program: that is, continual incarceration of people simply because they lack accommodation. This is a major concern, especially considering this can motivate reoffending in the form of survival offending.

Reoffending

Research has demonstrated the association between lack of accommodation and reoffending (Baldry et al., 2003a; 2003b; Cunneen & Luke, 2007), and how homelessness can lead to ‘survival offending’ and how substance abuse - used as a coping mechanism - can result in offending behaviour in attempts to fund the habit (Payne et al., 2015). The importance of stable housing was highlighted by all participants, and it is recognised that ‘the more times somebody moves from exiting prison, the more chances you’ve got of increasing the recidivism rate’ (Participant 2). The distinct lack of support and accommodation services after the defunding of REO evidently left people ‘high and dry’ (Participant 4), and participants complemented current research on the link between homelessness and reoffending, by stating that being released into nothingness ‘generally inspires more crime, and then you go back, and you have a roof over your head, three meals a day’ (Participant 10). The association between lack of transitional support, accommodation, survival and recidivism was argued by participants:

The rates of recidivism will continue. The crime rates within the community will be the same. – Participant 5

...most people come out with no planning, with obviously no support, and the inclination to get back in is high because if you're one of the 53% of the population who comes out to homelessness, then you know somewhere where you can get three square meals a day and a roof over your head – Participant 2

If you live on the streets the chances of you reoffending are pretty high. And why wouldn't they be? You are desperate, you have no hope, you gravitate back to the antisocial groups. Or you start breaking into houses, committing offences to get some cash to get a room for the night. – Participant 7

There is a significant irony evidenced in these comments. Incarceration is touted by government officials as a rehabilitative process, something that will halt, or at the very least curtail, offending. Yet the comments of participants in this study highlight clearly that without a supported transition process, release itself serves as a criminogenic factor that leads to reoffending. Participants noted that these complex circumstances are only further exacerbated by the significant social exclusion experienced by previously incarcerated people.

Social exclusion

All of the consequences outlined above contribute overall to social exclusion. Returning citizens are amongst the most socially excluded members of society (Jones-Finer & Nellis, 1998), and those who lack housing often experience social isolation and lack a sense of community or belonging (Baldry et al., 2006). Through interviews, it became evident that the

REO program provided more than accommodation and transitional support. It also provided prosocial modelling and mentoring:

The power of REO-type services is not just the practical stuff. The prosocial modelling and the mentoring is invaluable and probably the most valuable thing for any kind of support program like that. – Participant 8

One of the participants quoted John Brosnan, ‘What a prisoner needs on release is three things: a roof over his head, a job, and a friend’ (Participant 7). These needs were further corroborated and expanded by one participant:

People need to have a roof over their head, have a friend – they need to be touched, they need to be looked at, and they need to be listened to. – Participant 5

These comments highlight the central importance of release as a social experience. The REO program focused on providing opportunities for housing, employment, and prosocial relationships – and presented an opportunity for extra support alongside their probation officer. Social bonds like this were provided by the REO program and their loss was felt significantly by people involved.

Problems with accommodation, employment, mental health and offending behaviour, can be exacerbated by social isolation (Willis, 2018), and the defunding of the REO program ‘removed that extra contact...that friendship or support’ (Participant 10) with individuals who, because of their offending, ‘have no real contacts anywhere’ (Participant 10). Institutionalisation - which can be as ‘quick as seven days’ (Participant 5) - has a big impact on incarcerated persons, and oftentimes leads to people being ‘more antisocial than when

they went in’ (Participant 3). Institutionalisation causes many concerns for returning citizens, but particularly when it comes to social aspects, as ‘if people stay in jail long enough, that becomes their culture... their support network’ (Participant 3). Prison was described by participants as ‘quite a society... like a little town, and there are groups and classes’ (Participant 8) with ‘a lot of your associates, your mates’ (Participant 2). In stark contrast to this, the experience of being released was palpably different, ‘with nothing provided, no routine, nothing, all of a sudden they just have to do it on their own’ (Participant 9), which ‘can actually mean that they are very much on their own in a little unit somewhere in an area where they haven’t lived before’ (Participant 8). This social isolation can arguably become particularly apparent for returning citizens with parole conditions that state they are not to associate with certain persons – an onerous undertaking to fathom, let alone uphold, as noted by Halsey (2007; 2010) among others.

It is evident that the defunding of REO caused serious consequences for returning citizens who, without support and housing, remained in the system. The loss of an extra contact person upon release risked returning citizens experiencing social exclusion, which, coupled with a sense of hopelessness, increased the likelihood to reoffend. These consequences also impacted service providers, who are passionate and care for their clients.

Consequences for service providers

...because I care about them – I think I am the only person on the planet that does, apart from a couple of others – then it weighs heavy. – Participant 10

The consequences for service providers ranged from frustration and hopelessness, to loss of human resources, and health implications. It was abundantly clear that the consequences for

incarcerated people were also profoundly felt by the service providers. The following section provides an in-depth account of the consequences for service providers, and their ongoing lack of understanding for the defunding of the Reintegration for Ex-Offender’s program.

Confusion and lack of understanding about why a successful program was defunded

There was an apparent confusion and lack of understanding as to why the decision to defund the Reintegration for Ex-Offenders’ program was made, when it is ‘clear as day that persons who do receive treatment, who are assisted with reintegration into the community – it is more likely to be a good outcome for those persons than people who don’t’ (Participant 6). This confusion was coupled with an inability to understand the reasoning for its defunding:

It was really confusing, we couldn’t understand why they were taking the money and not replacing it with anything specialised at all. Couldn’t they see the risk to that? – Participant 9

We were saying, “Why, why?”. We’ve proven the money [the service providers] saved by doing this, and people’s lives got back together and everything.

Everything was going good. Why stop it? – Participant 11

The REO program successfully reduced the rate of recidivism down to 6.5 per cent compared to the general prison population of 46 per cent (Lloyd et al., 2013), ‘despite the fact that [service providers] took on some clients who everybody in the world had no expectations – they said they would never rehabilitate, they would never reintegrate’ (Participant 2). The dissolution of the program brought bewilderment to the fore amongst participants. They therefore reported disbelief and an inability to understand the reasoning for the defunding,

and that ‘if anything, you should do the opposite’ (Participant 11) and ‘expand it’ (Participant 7). This was the original recommendation from the independent evaluation of the REO program (Lloyd et al., 2013), as well as evaluations of previous programs, such as the Parolees Transitional Accommodation Project (van Aaken, 2010). Furthermore, despite participants reporting that ‘we pleaded and pleaded with them, and everybody else did too’ (Participant 11) and the commencement of ‘a small campaign to try to ensure that the funding was reinstated’ (Participant 6), the decision to defund the REO program remained. This lack of understanding stemmed from a belief that ‘government’s got a responsibility to fund these programs, because they are in the public’s interest and deliver public benefit’ (Participant 1), and therefore should be ‘interested in evidence-based policy’ (Participant 6), which posed the question: ‘...why would the government cut a program that was proven to be a success?’ (Participant 6). This will be further unpacked in the *Tough on crime and community safety* discussion in this chapter. A lack of an answer to this question caused significant frustration and hopelessness, much like that participants reported about incarcerated people.

Frustration and hopelessness

The disbelief and lack of understanding mentioned above tied into frustration, as the comments from this participant suggest: ‘Oh, well it was just so frustrating. You just can’t believe these things happen. You can’t understand the reasoning behind it all, why this is happening’ (Participant 11). Several participants reported that ‘it’s frustrating’ (Participant 5) and ‘very frustrating’ (Participant 6) when the value of a successful transitional support program is not recognised, and is subsequently defunded. The frustration experienced after the REO program was defunded, was coupled with how ‘powerless’ (Participant 11) they felt. This frustration came through in the form of how ‘all that work, for all those years, meant nothing’ (Participant 11), but also alluded to a feeling of impertinence, as demonstrated in the words of one participant: ‘It was a waste of my time. It’s kind of an insult, really’, who then

also immediately added: ‘Well, it wasn’t a waste because we got a number of people that are doing the right thing’ (Participant 5). This discouragement became even more evident as participants spoke of how their concerns were not recognised and when new providers ‘didn’t follow up on the people’ who were ‘just left dangling out there’ (Participant 11), and that workers ‘lose a bit of hope’ (Participant 8). Furthermore, participants mentioned the lack of consultation prior to the decision was made, as put by one participant:

It would’ve been nice to be asked, because we could tell them: “What you are doing is really important and it is really gonna make a negative impact on people if you take this away” – Participant 8

There was a sense of ultimate disbelief upon REO’s defunding, which amounted to a frustration that the value of transition programs are not recognised, despite their successes in reintegrating returning citizens. The frustration, and feeling powerless and hopeless for their clients, was coupled with a sense of having no options to provide returning citizens with.

Optionless service provision

Participants talked about the defunding of the REO program as a lack of options for them to provide a service to previously incarcerated people. They reported that their opportunities to provide assistance disappeared when the REO program was defunded because ‘you no longer have that option’ (Participant 7), and being left with the question: ‘who do we contact about this?’ (Participant 8). This notion of being without options was demonstrated by multiple participants:

We hear this a lot. “Have you got somewhere to live?”, “No”. And I used to be able to put people in touch with REO. And I did. But I can’t do that anymore, and I think that is an indictment of our society that that happens. – Participant 7

And he just kept saying, “I need somewhere to go, I have nothing – what am I going to do?”, and the only thing I could offer him was a Housing Connect phone number. – Participant 9

More importantly, Housing Connect acquiring the accommodation aspects has culminated in social isolation, and lack of accommodation and support, thereby increasing risks of reoffending, as captured by this participant:

You then go to a house that is completely empty. It has no curtains, it has no lightbulbs, and you are sitting there in this brick house with white walls – just like it is in prison. And you’re thinking, “Well, here I am, I’ve got no furniture, I’ve got no food, I’ve got no contact with anybody, and I am sitting in a house”. And then, “Here’s the dole money”, and \$280 and emergency payment – so what do you do? You’ve got to pay your rent, you have to pay your power, and you’ve got nothing. So how do they honestly expect someone just coming out of prison walking into that situation and surviving? The first thing that they are going to do is call their mates: “Here I am, I have nothing. Come on over, I want some company”. And in the space of two nights, they can be back in prison. – Participant 11

Not being able to provide options went hand in hand with the hopelessness discussed above, with participants saying, ‘it is disheartening’ (Participants 8) and ‘it alarms us that we can’t place people. We can’t say to people: “Have you contacted REO?”’ (Participant 7). The unmet needs and the lack of support since REO’s dissolution, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, meant that returning citizens are ‘still reaching out for that bit of help’ (Participant 11) and despite wanting to ‘help as much as I can’ (Participant 11), they were limited in what options and support they could provide. One participant noted that they made agreements between organisations to facilitate processes ‘because that is all that we could do’ (Participant 10). It is clear the lack of support since REO’s defunding caused disbelief, frustration, hopelessness, and feelings of not being able to provide returning citizens with any options, which were further exacerbated by the loss of human resources and relationships discussed below.

Human resources and relationships

The defunding of the REO program meant that ‘the service to clients was reduced and the human resource was lost’ (Participant 3), and had a significant impact on human capital, as demonstrated by these participants:

I think one of the first things we lost were the people who were working in the program. – Participant 3

I [worked with] a really good team... a brilliant team of people, who went and never returned to doing this kind of work. And that was a great loss, because they ended up having years of experience. – Participant 2

These comments highlight the loss of social human resources in defunding the program: the people providing the support were lost and the connections between these people were equally lost. These elements were integral to the program, as REO’s success was very much contingent on the people working within it, and the loss of these resources and connections were felt significantly by participants. It was further highlighted that Tasmania has experienced a number of reintegration programs over the years, which have been shared by different organisations, and that ‘if the delivery of a program moves from one organisation to the other, I think there is a loss of human capital - an experience built up within the first agency, that is lost’ (Participant 4). For a program to be successful, it ‘needs the right people’ (Participant 5) and considering that ‘experience is 70% of the job’ (Participant 3), the loss of human resources and capital is a significant consequence when programs are defunded. In addition, when considering a managerial perspective, participants reported that people ‘get very nervous at the end of a financial year... because we need to know who’s coming and who’s going and where the gaps are’ (Participant 9). This had the knock-on effect of ‘staff retention and staff morale [being] impacted by loss of these sorts of things’ (Participant 9).

Not only does it impact human resources within organisations, but ‘you lose those sorts of connections [between agencies]’ (Participant 2) which have flow-on effects on inter-agency relationships. One participant mentioned that the defunding of the REO program meant that ‘we’ve lost that personal touch’ (Participant 11). It was acknowledged that the relationship between agencies during the Reintegration for Ex-Offenders’ program’s existence was ‘quite a good, healthy relationship’ (Participant 11) and that it ‘takes a long time to actually develop good, trusting professional working relationships’ (Participant 2). As such, another problem that organisations face when a program is defunded, and is re-instituted later on, is that ‘you have to go through a process of seeking people to develop the networks’ (Participant 3), as the ‘relationships and trust are gone during those years’

(Participant 5), and ‘people gatekeep’ (Participant 3). Losing connections and networks in the first instance present considerable barriers to good service provision for incarcerated people, but also created more work when it meant those connections needed to be recreated post program defunding. Participants went on to discuss how stressful these processes were for them and the extensive implications this had for them in terms of health and wellbeing in the long term.

Pressure and health implications

The pressures of starting and facilitating a program were highlighted by numerous participants, as the complexities of applying for funding in a competitive tender environment with short-term funding ‘stifles so much good work’ (Participant 4). This short-term funding was emphasised by one participant: ‘I would never apply for funding for anything less than three years, because it is a waste of time’ (Participant 4). Furthermore, the added pressures on service providers created a potential risk ‘that [incarcerated persons] would be forgotten’ (Participant 10). Participants also highlighted that adding this service on an already saturated system was ‘not fair on untrained workers too, and those organisations’ (Participant 9), which resulted in negative consequences for service providers:

Caseloads had doubled, so people’s stress levels had doubled. Staff were under a lot of pressure. Their capacity to provide people with the time they needed - the capacity to be flexible and responsive - was gone. Because they’ve got caseloads of 30 plus, so they are just very focused on seeing the people they work with and trying to get a result as quickly as possible. There's no time flexibility. –

Participant 3

We don’t sit here today and say, “Tomorrow I’m going to start a program”. It takes us about 18 months before we even get the funding... So, it is a great deal of energy, and thought, and time and money. - Participant 5

It is clear that short term programs, and intermittent defunding and discontinuation of these programs, brought about concerning work circumstances for service providers. With increased caseloads and stress, it was unsurprising that participants noted these consequences as impacting their health in the long term.

This added pressure on service providers coupled with workers investing ‘a lot of themselves in their jobs... of themselves in their clients’ (Participant 4) was highlighted as a potential for ‘stress leave, family relationship breakdown, people that were providing the service that are now requiring the service because of their breakdowns, the level of drug abuse and self-medicating to get over things’ (Participant 5). Participants spoke of the difficult nature of their jobs, about hearing the tragic life stories told by incarcerated persons and they were ‘just heartbreaking... it is part of our jobs to hear those stories’ (Participant 9). More concerning, though, was how participants articulated a risk of this type of work being how they take on some of the returning citizens’ hopelessness and ‘feel so disheartened about this business that you just give up or become cynical’ (Participant 8). The potential to experience vicarious trauma for people working in the sector was addressed by other participants who had ‘seen evidence of that’ (Participant 4) throughout their journeys. The added pressure, and the inherently uncertain nature of the type of work undertaken by participants, is exacerbated by a compounded feeling of not being able to get anywhere, and being ‘willing to give you more than what you’re going to pay me for, because I am passionate about this, but you constantly take that away’ (Participant 5), resulting in burnout. There is no doubt that defunding of the REO program manifested a range of significant

consequences for service providers involved, all of which also led to a range of complex social consequences.

Social and economic consequences

We need to get smart on crime, not tough on crime. – Participant 2

The social consequences of REO’s defunding resulted from the consequences experienced by service providers and returning citizens. The following section provides an in-depth discussion of the consequences for the wider community, including direct and indirect economic costs due to increased prison numbers, as well as emotional costs due to decreased community safety and potential future victims, and families of victims and incarcerated persons.

Prison numbers and opportunities

As discussed in Chapter Two and highlighted by participants throughout this chapter, a lack of accommodation and support leads to increased risk of recidivism. In the last four years, Tasmania’s imprisonment rate has increased from 112 per 100,000 adult population in 2014 to 146 per 100,000 in 2017, and the number of incarcerated persons has increased from 448 in 2014 to 596 in 2017 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2018) – an increase of 33 per cent. As noted above, one of the direct consequences of defunding the REO program was that incarcerated persons who were eligible for parole remained in the system. Most importantly, this meant they stayed incarcerated even when eligible for parole:

That’s how it’s been operating now because the capacity has been reached, and they are over and above 640 people or something there today for a prison that has [the capacity for] 580. – Participant 2

You know, there are people in [prison] that shouldn’t be there, and it would definitely fill out some space. – Participant 8

Although not ‘the biggest’ (Participant 8) reason for prisons reaching capacity, it was argued that ‘you’ve got people sitting there who are ready for parole but can’t go’ (Participant 10), which further has an impact on, not only, ‘managing a prisoner population, but access to programs’ (Participant 1) with those eligible – but unable to apply - for parole ‘taking a position for somebody else who could benefit’ (Participant 8) from work, treatment, and rehabilitation programs.

Sixteen per cent of Tasmania’s eligible prison population are engaged in education and training, and 17.4 per cent is employed, compared to the national average of 32.9 per cent and 74.7 per cent, respectively (Productivity Commission, 2018). It is obvious that the opportunity for employment, education and training is diminished with an increase in prison numbers, and one can argue that the defunding of the REO program has resulted in less opportunities. However, a ‘number of prisoners are illiterate’ (Participant 7) and it was argued that the training and educational opportunities offered ‘weren’t applicable’ for ‘the bloke who never went to school’ (Participant 5). ‘Employment opportunities and training are major needs’ (Participant 7) for currently incarcerated persons to facilitate their reintegration upon release, as many of them ‘never grew up with the education or the privileges... The opportunities that we had’ (Participant 9). It was recognised that, without providing opportunities to people who ‘don’t have the skills to create opportunity’ (Participant 5) we

are ‘setting them up to fail is a bit harsh, but it certainly doesn’t help’ (Participant 8).

Although it is clear that increases in prison numbers were influenced by the defunding of the REO program, participants suggested that the increase in these numbers might also arguably be attributed to the punitive attitudes of the general public and politicians, and the propensity for being tough on crime, as discussed below.

Tough on crime and community safety

Participants commonly stated that the defunding of the REO program, and the arguable subsequent increase in prison numbers, was due ‘populist politics’ (Participant 2; Participant 4). They noted how this emerged out of a tough on crime approach employed by politicians to win votes, despite the fact that ‘crime rates in this state are very low’ (Participant 7) and that ‘punishment doesn’t work’ (Participant 8). The decision to defund REO was considered ‘an act of stupidity on the part of the government’ (Participant 7). The REO program ‘was a successful program that made a significant impact on the rates of recidivism’ (Participant 5) and ‘made a positive difference to people’s lives, and therefore a positive difference to the community’ (Participant 1). A strong focus on rehabilitation is in everybody’s best interest, as articulated by this participant:

If we want to make our community a safer place to live, if we want to make it better for everybody, then we’ve got to start thinking about this cohort that is going to be coming back in. If we provide supports, if we provide security for them, to come out and exit and give them the best opportunity to reintegrate into community, our community will be a safer place. – Participant 2

The tough on crime approach was described by participants as the underlying factor for REO’s defunding, and was further argued to be employed as populist politics to please electorates who, due to fear of crime, believe that punishment is the answer. This was further elaborated on by participants who spoke of the general public’s lack of knowledge as the catalyst for fear.

A ‘huge fear factor’ (Participant 9) and the general population’s lack of knowledge of incarcerated persons and returning citizens became evident through conversations with participants, who further highlighted the difficulty of being released in Tasmania ‘because it’s such a small place’ (Participant 5), and rightfully asked “When is it up? When have you done your time? When are you no longer an ex-offender?” (Participant 8). Participants agreed that the public has no real awareness of how prison works, what happens upon release, and why they should care about returning citizens:

The thing that they forget – sometimes universal - is that one day these people are going to get out, and the worse they are treated in here, the worse it is going to be for them when they get out, and most of all the community. – Participant 9

Almost everyone who is in prison is going to get out one day, and they are going to move into a house next to you, or me, or somebody in our community. –

Participant 1

The general public wants to feel safe in their communities, and believe this to be achieved through tough on crime approaches. This lack of knowledge contributes to a fear of crime, which further propels the populist politics of punishment. Ironically, tough on crime

approaches do not make our communities safer – quite the opposite – and are therefore inefficient, but further inflicts significant social and economic costs upon the community.

Social and economic costs

Research indicates that support programs are significantly more cost-efficient compared to incarceration, and participants wholeheartedly agreed that the cost of incarceration exceeded the cost of the REO program. It was argued that ‘this was a very affordable program’ and ‘value for money’ (Participant 7), and that it is ‘no brainer when it comes to that pure economic rationalist’ (Participant 2) of spending ‘12-13,000 dollars per person per year on rehabilitation and reintegration, rather than spend 140,000 dollars per year and keep them in prison’ (Participant 2), a contention that clearly aligns with current literature. It was agreed that ‘good social policy, especially in this area, is good economic policy’ (Participant 3) which saves the government, and in turn taxpayers, money by ‘reducing the costs of policing... the costs at the court...the costs of incarceration’ (Participant 3), as well health-related costs. The ongoing cost of incarceration aside, impacts of ‘reoffending and further crime, further victims, further costs to the state’ (Participant 4), as well as ‘costs involved in what the crime has been for the community or for other families, liabilities for insurance, the cost of the courts, the cost of transport’ (Participant 5), further demonstrates the need to consider social and emotional costs to both victims and families. It was established that the REO program was a ‘cheap program’ (Participant 7), and that it cost ‘about \$20,000 a year to keep someone out of jail’ (Participant 5), which in comparison to Tasmania’s estimated annual rate of \$130,500 to keep someone incarcerated, would arguably ‘save taxpayers enormous sums of money’ (Participant 7):

The program is saving the justice system untold millions... We’re saving them millions of dollars per year, per person. We’re also saving money in the health system. – Participant 3

They are returning citizens, and it is in our interest – the interest of the safety of the community but also the social fabric, that we ensure that we invest in these people in a way that means – if we are brutally cold about it: it means that it is less expensive in the future. So just from a purely rational economic point of view, it makes sense. – Participant 7

Given the cost savings for the government and for tax payers, in addition to reducing further victimisation, participants were confused about defunding the REO program, as a program that was remarkably cheaper than incarceration and substantially reduced the costs of criminal processing systems in Tasmania.

It was argued by participants that some aspects of the REO program were ‘invaluable’, such as the ‘prosocial modelling and the mentoring’ (Participant 8) and that one cannot ‘put a cost on it, because it is free’ (Participant 8). Furthermore, it was evident that the general consensus was that withdrawing funding from the Reintegration for Ex-Offenders’ program ‘is false economy, because what it leads to, we have seen an increase in recidivism under this government’ (Participant 7), and that instead of spending money on building a new prison, ‘we need to spend our dollars wisely’ (Participant 6), as it is not only irresponsible policy - but will increase costs to the community and taxpayers:

So that [reaching capacity] is what happens when it falls over, and that’s the stupidity of having something that works for a relatively small amount of money,

and now we are looking at spending 350 million dollars on building a new prison, upgrading the older prisons. It is dumb policy. – Participant 2

Furthermore, as mentioned previously, planning, designing, and starting a program is a lengthy process, and ‘there is a lot of money that needs to be spent in re-funding a program’ (Participant 6), who further stated that ‘it is a waste of money to keep funding and then defunding programs that are found to be a success’. The direct economic costs to the community of continued use of incarceration are exorbitant compared to the savings that REO achieved by keeping people out of prison. It was argued that certain aspects of REO could not be measured in monetary value, but were invaluable to returning citizens, and therefore the safety of the wider community.

Conclusion

This chapter has provided an in-depth account of the consequences of defunding the REO program. It begun by demonstrating the gap in services, and continued by discussing consequences for incarcerated persons, consequences for service providers, and social consequences. The gap in services, and the removal of a specialised service, led to unmet needs such as lack of housing, and lack of support post-release. This was argued to contribute to increased risks of recidivism, as well as incarcerated persons remaining in jail when they were eligible for parole and could benefit from serving the remainder of their sentence in the community. The lack of services and unmet needs were highlighted by the number of participants who stated that the REO program was still talked about, that people were still asking to be referred, and further demonstrated by the number of returning citizens who continue to reach out after their release. The defunding left incarcerated persons without options and hope, and many asked themselves and workers: ‘What now?’. Ultimately its

dissolution, and the discontinuation of support, led to a breakdown of relationships and trust that required significant labour and time to develop, in the very community that service providers were trying to assist. The lack of support post-release meant that an extra level of contact between the returning citizen and the community disappeared, thus resulting in social exclusion, which further exacerbates any issues experienced by these persons, thereby increasing the risk of reoffending.

Service providers reported a loss of reputation of the organisation running the program, a lack of understanding and a disbelief that a successful program was defunded, which translated into frustration and hopelessness, and a sense of their efforts being unrecognised and that their hard work meant nothing. A loss of human agency and relationships between different agencies, and workers moving onto other organisations and other jobs, increased pressure on service providers at all levels, who felt that they lacked options and no longer knew where to refer people for support. Due to a loss of connections and communication between agencies, people felt that they were met with a sense of gatekeeping, which further inhibited their ability to assist. This had further implications on participants’ health, who reported that a frustration of not getting anywhere whilst investing a lot of themselves in their jobs and their clients, could lead to burnout - which would impact both service providers and their families. Participants also reported the potential of experiencing vicarious trauma through hearing their clients’ tragic stories, and the risk of becoming disheartened and cynical about the industry.

Furthermore, participants reported social consequences, such as an increase in prison numbers, which furthermore had the potential to result in overcrowding, and the related costs of incarceration versus employing a transitional support program. The defunding of the Reintegration for Ex-Offenders’ program was seen as a result of populist politics, and the application of a tough on crime approach in an effort to win votes. It was highlighted that

proclaiming tough on crime approaches, although ineffective in actually reducing recidivism, and mostly counterproductive, was an easy way to win votes, and was contingent on the general public’s fear of crime, and lack of knowledge about prison, the incarcerated persons, and their reason for offending in the first place.

As demonstrated throughout this chapter, the consequences of defunding the Reintegration for Ex-Offenders’ program were numerous, but most importantly they were experienced as profoundly harmful. Tasmania has seen an increase in recidivism rates, incarceration rates, as well as an increase in parole applications being declined due to lack of accommodation. It has been recognised by all participants that transitional support, and providing opportunities for accommodation and employment, is imperative to change offending behaviour, which in turn benefits the community. The following chapter will talk about the consequences of not providing ongoing funding – and thereby continuity - for rehabilitation, resulting in high program turnover, and what is needed in the future to address these issues and ensure a safe community for all.

CHAPTER FIVE

‘It just shows a lack of commitment’: the consequences of program churn

Introduction

What’s lost during the years? Heaps. On so many different levels. – Participant 5

The internal and external consequences of defunding the Reintegration for Ex-Offenders’ (REO) program were discussed in the previous chapter, with this chapter documenting the profound and complex consequences that defunding had on service availability and accessibility, incarcerated persons and service providers, as well as impacts on a larger societal level. This chapter will continue to discuss these consequences, with a focus on the individual and social consequences of program churn. Tasmania has experienced a number of transitional support programs over the years, starting with the XCELL program in 2003 (The Salvation Army, n.d. b), followed by the Transitional Support Model for ex-Prisoners (TSMP) and the Parolees’ Transitional Accommodation Project (PTAP) in 2007 (Donoghue, 2017), the Post-Release Options Program (PROP) in 2008 (Carlisle, 2013), the REO program in 2011 and, upon its dissolution in 2015, the Intensive Tenancy Support Services which operated as a continuation of the REO program for one year until 2016. This chapter will focus on the impacts of program churn - the consequences of starting, defunding, and reinstating programs rather than offering continuous funding, and thus continuous support. Furthermore, it will provide an account of the participants’ views of what is required in the

future: a real investment in the area of rehabilitation and reintegration, and ongoing funding, but also the need for a change of public attitudes and around tough on crime politics.

Program churn – a lack of commitment

The continuous cycle of programs being started and defunded, and started again, was recognised as a fundamental lack of commitment to these programs:

So, by starting programs and defunding them, and starting and defunding them, or changing the name, or waiting a couple of years – it’s basically just saying we don’t have a commitment to this. – Participant 5

Not surprisingly, many of the direct consequences of defunding the Reintegration for Ex-Offenders’ program were also highlighted as relevant to the consequences of program churn, and the lack of continuity that arises with short-term funding. There was an apparent confusion, and lack of understanding, about why rehabilitation programs were not granted investment on an ongoing basis, despite their evident success in reducing recidivism rates and contributing to a safer community (Lloyd et al., 2013; van Aaken, 2010). As one can expect, the lack of continuity in services pre- and post-release means that relationships and trust are broken down – both within and between organisations, but particularly impacting the relationships and trust between the organisations and ‘the actual community we are trying to service’ (Participant 5). This continued failure and lack of support – as demonstrated in Chapter Four - results in reoffending, which impacts the whole community, with ‘further crime, further victims, further costs to the state’ (Participant 4). Participants highlighted in particular how the continued failure of defunding perpetuated the marginalisation of returning citizens and how this led to ongoing stigma.

Continued failure and perpetuating marginalisation of returned citizens

It is recognised that persons involved in criminal processing systems are overrepresented in low socioeconomic status populations and are amongst the most vulnerable in our society (Baldry et al., 2003b; 2006). The continuous program churn perpetuates the marginalisation experienced by returning citizens, and evolves into yet ‘another failure’ (Participant 5) and ‘an opportunity to say, “I told you”, rather than be proved wrong’ (Participant 8). The biggest consequence of starting and defunding programs, and reconstituting them further down the track, is the loss of trust in a community that have been ‘let down time and time again’ (Participant 8) and have been ‘completely failed by [the system]’ (Participant 5):

So, when we say, “We’re going to do this’, and we don’t do it, or it takes a month of Sundays to happen - well it’s just another failure. It’s just another reason for people to keep their resistance against the system that’s failed them all their lives anyway. – Participant 5

Furthermore, as stated by the participant above, this continuous cycle of programs indicates a lack of commitment, and that ‘we have such a class divide. We have people who aren’t worth our time and money’ (Participant 8). These people, who often have ‘failed in the education system, and then they failed in the job marketplace’ (Participant 3), and who have experienced ‘dysfunctioning homes, and having significant trauma in their lives, in their early developmental years’ (Participant 2), need assistance to ‘unpack it, sort it out, and deal with it’ (Participant 2). It was further recognised that because it is difficult for returning citizens to talk about some aspects of their lives - ‘a lot of it is really, really, really, personal’ (Participant 11) - program churn, and subsequently change in staff, mean that currently

incarcerated persons and returning citizens ‘have to start again with a new case manager’, and ‘they don’t want to do that... they feel cheated and left out. Like someone’s left them’ (Participant 11). A lifetime of trauma, failure, and incarceration cannot be undone in a short period of time, and when programs continuously receive short-term funding and then cease to operate, it causes significant consequences for individuals who require ongoing support. This ultimately means that programs are ineffective without ongoing funding, and the lack of commitment to support programs becomes yet another system failure. This was aptly summarised by one participant in particular:

Why put a service in that can’t actually meet the need of a participant? Because to set someone up to fail is absolute neglect and the consequences of that can be little, but they can be severe. – Participant 5

Continued failure clearly leads to considerably worrying outcomes for returning citizens, including the perpetuation of stigma.

Identity and stigma

In line with research on labelling theory and recidivism (Bernburg & Krohn, 2003; Bernburg, Krohn, & Rivera, 2006; Chiricos, Barrick, Bales, & Bontrager, 2007; Rowe, 2011), participants emphasised the stigma and discrimination that occurs with labelling, and that ‘identity is really big’ (Participant 8), further stating that ‘the labels we give them – inmate, prisoner, offender... are so powerful and they take them on themselves’ (Participant 8). Participants spoke of returning citizens struggling to come to terms with their self-identity, “If I am not an offender, if I am not an inmate in cell block such and such, who am I?”

(Participant 8). It was recognised that transitional support programs assist returning citizens in addressing the social stigma that comes with a criminal record:

REO was good in that there was some good outcomes, there were some really good things that people – you know – shook off the stigma a little bit, and could start to get resettled. – Participant 8

The stigma attached to labels, and the difficulties of exiting prison (Halsey, 2007; Halsey, 2010; Halsey & Harris, 2011) were recognised as particularly difficult in Tasmania ‘where everybody knows everybody’ (Participant 4) ‘because it’s such a small place... they walk out, and they know that people know’ (Participant 5), and that returning citizens find release confronting and that it can be ‘quite foreign to actually even just walk into a busy street’ (Participant 2). Participants stated that ‘we [society] judge formerly incarcerated people’ (Participant 5), and due to Tasmania being such a small jurisdiction, returning citizens face significant problems upon release:

Because everybody thinks, “Everybody knows me, they can see my New Balance shoes, they can see my jail tats, everybody’s looking at me.” – Participant 2

In conjunction with this general stigma of being a returned citizen, participants noted the limited opportunities for housing and employment: ‘if you want to rent a property in Tasmania, you have to provide a police report to particular real estate agents’ (Participant 5), and ‘if you want to get a job, you’ll be asked for your police report’ (Participant 5). Not only do they face discrimination due to their criminal record, but it is also increasingly difficult when they are looking to get ‘away from their previous cohort or their peer group’

(Participant 3). It was argued that ‘if the highest court in the land has deemed someone safe and responsible’ (Participant 5) to return to the community, then we must trust their decision and understand that ‘they [returning citizens] are not a risk’ (Participant 5). Removing transitional support programs therefore removes the opportunity to resettle in a new area and thus escape associations with pro-criminal peers, because sometimes ‘their friends are having issues with alcohol, drugs’ (Participant 11), and it can be difficult to withstand the pressures and ‘make it on their own, rather than just go back to what they did before’ (Participant 11).

Professional relationships and human capital

In line with discussion in the previous chapter, participants in this study highlighted the loss of professional relationships and trust, and the loss of human resources. This subsequently has flow-on effects on inter-agency relationships, and diminishes ‘staff morale’ (Participant 8), due to the restrictions of short-term funding and staff not feeling that they are able to make a long-lasting difference. Despite programs being very similar in characteristics, the practice of defunding and restarting programs, or changing program names or providers, leads to cynicism in both service providers and currently incarcerated persons. It was recognised that it was challenging to get both staff and incarcerated persons on board when a successful transitional support program collapses, and that the commencement of a new programs is met with a ‘wariness of “Oh, is this just going to be another REO [for example]?... Well that didn’t work”’ (Participant 8), but also that ‘everything that comes after it is having to work a little bit harder to prove that it is going to last’ (Participant 8), thus adding pressures on program providers. The loss of professional relationships, coupled with cynicism, was particularly problematic as participants identified that in order to ‘get referrals initially, we had to gain the trust of the people working there [prison]’ as ‘[service providers] motives and intentions were questioned’ (Participant 3). It is not just the human capital from

the defunded program itself that is lost. When programs cease to operate and there is a gap in services, people in other organisations move on as well. For instance, accommodation providers move on, with whom the program deliverer has developed professional relationships in which they ‘could actually negotiate those really significant outcomes’ (Participant 2):

It’s also that level of trust within the workforce, within other agencies. Once you burn them, then you’re not going to get another person in. – Participant 3

So, you lose those sorts of connections and that takes a long time to actually develop good, trusting professional working relationships with professionals. – Participant 2

As such, the relationships that organisations ‘have been able to build with housing providers, and employment and vocational training providers is lost’ (Participant 6). This means that when programs are recommenced, providers ‘have to go through a process of seeking people to develop the networks’ (Participant 3). ‘It is really important to maintain those [professional] networks’ (Participant 2) and having contacts that understand the necessity for transitional tenancy support in mitigating risks, and how with it ‘that person and that house has a much, much better chance of surviving’ (Participant 2). These relationships, and the understanding and knowledge that come with long-standing working relationships, lapse when programs are defunded and reconstituted later on, adding significant pressure on service providers.

Furthermore, it was agreed by all participants that ‘it takes a certain individual’ (Participant 5), that is ‘nurtured and bred’ (Participant 2) to do this kind of work and that the

‘individual capacity and individual characteristics that it takes to work with someone... is quite unique’ (Participant 2). The loss of human capital was therefore considered a significant consequence of program churn, as staff end up ‘having years of experience. They were the right people for the job, and they’ve been snapped up by other organisations who have taken their skills’ (Participant 2). It was highlighted that in order to work with this particular cohort ‘you have to be exposed’ (Participant 5), and that experience outweighs qualifications and that ‘you can’t drag somebody out of university or TAFE’ (Participant 2) as it is not enough to simply have the understanding about the cause and effect, without the experience of knowing ‘what to expect from the client group and... from yourself as well’ (Participant 3). In addition, it was recognised that the people who work in this sector are ‘prepared to make the commitment long-term’ (Participant 4). This lack of commitment to make a real investment in the rehabilitation area has its consequences for human agency, and finding the right person for the job, as highlighted by one participant:

I think in cases when you know you only have one or two years’ of funding, and there is a really good chance that there won’t be recurrent funding following on from that, you are not going to recruit the best people for the job. If you want the best people for the job, people in this area, I feel, would like to get their teeth into this sort of work for three, four, five, six years... So, to get those people you have to offer them something better than two years’ of funding. – Participant 4

Ongoing funding is centrally important to bring together the best people for the job, especially if service providers are going to avoid burnout and disengagement.

Disengagement and burnout of service providers

The lack of understanding as to why the REO program was defunded, and the frustration and hopelessness mentioned in the previous chapter, are applicable to the continuous cycle of defunding and starting programs as well. This frustration emerged from being ‘passionate’ (Participant 5) about assisting returning citizens and improving our community. The people working in this sector ‘have a vocation, so they want to help, and they’ll stretch themselves and they’ll try to do more than they’re capable of doing’ (Participant 3). When programs are defunded, workers would continue to support returning citizens ‘out of the goodness of their hearts’ (Participant 4), as it was recognised that if support ‘services had just gone and shut the door – those people [who need intensive support] wouldn’t have survived’ (Participant 2). The consequences for service providers of not being able to provide ongoing support to returning citizens, was summarised by participants:

It is one of the risks in this job, is to take some of that on yourself, and to feel so disheartened about this business that you just give up or become cynical. It is hard. – Participant 8

Then you get some real champions in the sector that are genuinely passionate about these things. They get disengaged. – Participant 5

Research indicates that social workers are at risk for compassion fatigue, stress-related burnout, and vicarious trauma (in the form of exposure to another person’s trauma history for example) due to the emotionally demanding nature of the work (Collins, 2008; Grant & Kinman, 2011; Lloyd, King & Chenoweth, 2002; Portnoy, 2011). This was further corroborated by participants who recognised that there is a high ‘burnout rate’ (Participant 5)

and ‘vicarious trauma in people working’ (Participant 4) in non-government organisations (NGOs), because ‘we see things that we shouldn’t see’ (Participant 5). This means that there is a tangible risk for ‘stress leave, family relationship breakdown’ (Participant 5) and service providers requiring the very services they are providing. However, it was argued that, rather than stress, ‘a large component of the burnout is this – I can’t get anywhere’ (Participant 5). As highlighted in the previous chapter, workers invest a lot of themselves in their jobs and their clients, ‘trying to build them up’ (Participant 8) and ‘try[ing] to do more with less’ (Participant 3), so when programs are continuously defunded, it has a huge impact on staff morale, and ‘fresh ideas, motivation is gone’ (Participant 5). The lack of commitment discussed above shone through here as well, with participants saying that ‘more investment in the area of reintegration as a whole’ (Participant 8) is needed. It was argued that by not having a ‘strong commitment to people, we’re actually creating a bigger problem’ (Participant 5), not just for service providers, but for currently incarcerated persons, returning citizens, and the wider community. The underlying lack of commitment can further be seen with the current short-term funding cycles, as will be discussed below. As stated by one participant, ‘the funding that disappeared from REO is a prime example of it [rehabilitation] not being a priority’ (Participant 8).

Short-term funding and competitive tendering

One of the running themes throughout this study has been the issue of short-term funding, and all consequences highlighted thus far are directly impacted by the inability to access ongoing funding. Obviously, ‘the more resources you have, the more quality work you can do’ (Participant 3), because ‘you’ve got the resources to help people with’ (Participant 11). The difficulties associated with not receiving adequate funding mean that service providers are unable to provide a quality service and ‘set somebody up in a property’ (Participant 2).

The costs associated with re-funding programs ‘is a waste of money’ (Participant 6) and it ‘doesn’t make any sense at all, financially’ (Participant 10) when continuous support would provide a more cost-effective alternative to punishment, as ‘it’s cheaper to actually get people out of jail’ (Participant 3). Furthermore, a lot of energy, thought, time, and money, is invested before applying for funding, and each time a new program is started up, ‘you’ve got to do it again’ (Participant 5). A bit of frustration and hopelessness shone through with short-term funding as well:

In the NGO sector, we’re used to two-year funding cycles. They’re silly. It’s a change of Minister, it’s a change of Head of the Department, it’s a change of the Director of the prison, it’s a change of whatever. – Participant 5

It does make it hard for programs to, not only to operate well, but to plan for the future if they don’t have any funding certainty. – Participant 1

Participants also mentioned that ‘short term funding and competitive tendering stifles so much good work’ (Participant 4), and argued that ‘it shouldn’t be tendered out’ (Participant 11), but rather ‘done in such a way where if the company has proven themselves in the past, then they’ve got the job’ (Participant 11). As agreed by all participants, the service has to focus on quality rather than quantity, ‘because quality is the only thing that really ensures us of any success’ (Participant 2). As such, it was argued that programs should be ‘done on merit, not on cost’ (Participant 11) and who can provide the cheapest program. The complexities of acquiring funding, and being at mercy of the funding bodies, was demonstrated by this participant:

So basically, when we put a proposal to a government body, we’ll get something back to say can you do it for A, B, and C, and this is exactly what we want you to do. If I say can I have a look at how you came to that? No. That’s what we’re offering. So, then it’s a choice. Do you do it or not? – Participant 5

Underlying factors

If we’re telling the very people that we’ve failed through the system that you have to put trust back in it – trust us – and then we don’t trust them when the system has deemed them trustworthy, well, what message are we sending? – Participant 5

Throughout the study, participants reflected on the underlying factor of the lack of commitment that contributes to this continuous cycle of programs. Although short-term funding was identified as an issue, there was a notion that the determinant for this is the general public’s fear of crime which generates punitive attitudes, which in turn impacts political decisions.

Fear of crime, othering, and tough on crime

Participants spoke of tough on crime approaches as one reason for the lack of investment in the rehabilitation area, and how ‘this all gets back to a lack of education from the general public, [who] vote in our members, [who] have short-term interests’ (Participant 5). It was apparent to all participants that the tough on crime approach does not work and that ‘our [prison] numbers are increasing’ (Participant 8). This has been supported by literature for a long time, and this continues today, with research further arguing that tough on crime approaches have been unevenly distributed to already marginalised populations (Elikann,

1996; Kelly, 2015; Lynch & Sabol, 1997). It was argued that the tough on crime approach originated from a fear of crime:

There is a huge fear factor and so much ignorance around, it is incredible. –

Participant 9

I think that they like to think of people who commit offences as ‘the other’. They are ‘the other, I am not like that’. – Participant 8

Participants agreed that one reason for this fear of crime is due to representation in social media, news, and movies, which are ‘completely inaccurate’ and ‘not what prison is like at all’ (Participant 8). It was further argued that the media is ‘to some extent responsible for’ (Participant 7) the false public perception that crime rates are on the rise, as well as reporting ‘negative stories...about services like gyms and TVs’ (Participant 9) in prison, thereby contributing to the idea that incarcerated persons have it easy and receive too many benefits. It was agreed by all that ‘the way that media reports crime is appalling’, (Participant 7) and that they ‘won’t fact check’ (Participant 10) and ‘never take all the factors into account’ (Participant 7), but that news agencies instead use the hierarchy, ‘if it bleeds, it leads... be shocking’ (Participant 5). The following section will give an account of the level of fear of crime, lack of education, and ignorance, and how it influences politics and leads to tough on crime approaches. Participants spoke of the public separating themselves from those who commit offences – othering - and being unable to see that ‘we all have the potential to end up in [prison], but we have all been lucky enough to have people to support us and educate us and love us’ (Participant 8). It was recognised that the general public do not realise that incarcerated persons ‘never grew up with the education or the privileges... the opportunities

that we had’ (Participant 9) and how a lack of education and love impacts decision-making ability.

This lack of education, or fear of crime and othering, results in punitive attitudes, which further lead to policy decisions that are not evidence-based, but rather are made because our Ministers ‘are pleasing their electorate’ (Participant 5). The underlying notion was that the government would ‘rather spend a lot of money being tough on crime than actually try and address the problem: the causes of crime’ (Participant 3). It was speculated that the general public’s punitive attitudes were ‘probably part of it, the government, the funding body was under pressure to put money elsewhere because it was nicer’ (Participant 8), and that - instead of this aim to please politics, we need actual leadership and that ‘politicians need to be saying to people, “We are going to be smart on crime. Not tough on crime”’ (Participant 7).

‘Populist politics’ (Participant 4) and winning ‘easy votes’ (Participant 2) was seen as an in-grained reason for the tough on crime approach, as ‘there are no votes’ (Participant 10) in advocating for returning citizens’ reintegration, which furthermore sets the foundation for the lack of commitment. This popular and populist politics is upheld ‘even though when you look at the data and the evidence that those policies don’t help with making our communities safer, they go ahead with them anyways’ (Participant 1). This initiated a discussion around good policy, and how to address this to ensure future investment in rehabilitative practices.

So, how do we fix it?

Everybody has to have a change of attitude. I don’t understand why we don’t just look back at history and say, “Well, what we’re doing isn’t working”. –

Participant 5

We should be debating it more, if it is going to have a political – and it will, politics will always play at the heart of whatever it is in Australia – I don’t know why we are not debating it properly. It is a conversation we just have to have. –

Participant 9

All participants were in agreeance that the current system is ‘expensive’, ‘counterproductive’ (Participant 7), and that we have the potential to ‘save taxpayers enormous sums of money’ (Participant 7) by implementing change. The current tough on crime climate, and the lack of proper investment in the rehabilitation area, need to change, and it was argued that this could be achieved through good social policy, which, ‘especially in this area, is good economic policy... which is good for the taxpayers’ (Participant 3), and through a change of public attitudes.

Good social policy – a rehabilitative focus

Participants highlighted that rehabilitation and reintegration are not currently priorities and that until this area ‘is seen as an important social issue just as much as anything else, we are going to be always just trying to scramble’ (Participant 8). It was argued that the money put into transitional support programs ‘should be seen as an investment rather than a “Oh, I suppose we better” type of thing’ (Participant 8), and that ‘money should be spent in this field rather than build another prison’ (Participant 8), or ‘upgrading the older prisons (Participant 2). It was argued that ‘the beliefs some of the system was based on ha[ve]’ not change[d] since it first started’ (Participant 10) and that investment in this area is crucial to provide opportunities:

I think we need investment in areas where we’re going to get a good return. And a good return is where people aren’t reoffending, and are housed, and are trained, or have access to education, or access to employment, and have access to be able to develop relationships with family. At the end of the day though, it’s not about what we can do. It’s providing the opportunity for people to make those decisions and those changes. Because if we offend and we choose to offend, we need a reason why we’re not going to. Or we need an opportunity to use our talents to do something else. – Participant 3

Furthermore, it was argued that due to this tough on crime approach, the environment and consensus in prison is very much ‘punishment, punishment, punishment’ (Participant 9). Participants agreed that Australia’s propensity to punish results in a culture where ‘it is not just the deprivation of liberty which is the punishment, but they ought to be punished in terms of their future – employment, education, housing’ (Participant 7). Many participants argued that other countries - in particular Scandinavian countries– ‘address this with a common-sense approach, with significant wins and successes’ (Participant 5) and that they do a much better job of providing opportunities both within prison and upon release, and where ‘the whole resettlement, the mindset is so different’ (Participant 8) allows returning citizens to be welcomed back into the community. It was agreed that prison has to be a deterrent, but that without effective rehabilitation focus ‘the prison system really just warehouses them’ (Participant 7). Incarcerated persons who have been in the system for a long time and who, as such, do not have basic skills, should have access to ‘programs about how to cook a meal’ (Participant 10), and that address ‘emotional skills’ (Participant 10), and that are specifically tailored to this cohort: ‘the bloke who never went to school’ (Participant 5) and the ‘shameful number’ (Participant 7) of incarcerated persons who are illiterate. Identifying ‘what those

blockages and barriers’ (Participant 3) are within the prison population, and ‘working on that while in jail’ (Participant 3), were seen as obvious and integral to move away from this notion of punishment.

All participants agreed that ‘there is a place for prisons to keep people safe’ (Participant 7) and that some people, a ‘very small percentage of people’ (Participant 5), need to go to jail ‘because they are incapable of functioning in the community’ (Participant 10). The use of imprisonment can sometimes work as a deterrent for ‘people that have done a silly little mistake’ (Participant 5), but regardless prison ‘should do something with them while they are in there to make that [reason for offending] better’ (Participant 10). It was agreed by all participants that ‘it is a failed system’ (Participant 5), and that incarceration and ‘punishment alone doesn’t work’ (Participant 8), as supported by research (Cullen et al., 2011). Participants also highlighted the prison environment and that the mindset should be that ‘reintegration starts at the beginning’ (Participant 9) of an individual’s sentence, but that without any real commitment towards rehabilitation it is difficult to ‘get people to rehabilitate in an environment where there's all this influence - some good, some bad - but without the real resources’ (Participant 5) to make that rehabilitation happen. As stated by one participant: ‘We need less prisons and more help’ (Participant 11).

Innovative policies

Although it was argued that ‘government’s got a responsibility to fund these programs, because they are in the public’s interest, and deliver public benefit’ (Participant 1), it was recognised that organisations ‘need to look more creatively about where we get our funding from’ (Participant 2). Participants provided some ideas around how to improve the difficulties of the current funding environment, and social impact bonds were mentioned by numerous participants as an alternative to a fully government-funded approach. It was

emphasised that innovative solutions were tried in other parts of the country, and that the ‘New South Wales government is a good example’ (Participant 4) referring to the Justice Reinvest project in Bourke, which focuses on creating better coordinated support to vulnerable families and children, and building trust between community and service providers through collective impact (Just Reinvest NSW, n.d.). The need and ability to think innovatively about policies and practices was illustrated by participants:

I think our society needs to have a little bit more imagination about how we can get positive outcomes out of people who we don’t see as currently of benefit to the community. – Participant 3

Some of the other ways we can actually do it, is we can look at social impact bonds – so social investment and providing a return on investment that satisfies the philanthropical arm of an organisation for instance, or an individual donor, whereby risk and mitigation of providing funding into a program like this can be offset, so government don’t necessarily have to pay for it, but they provide a return on that investment if it actually works. – Participant 2

Other participants mentioned the importance of politicians and policy makers consulting organisations prior to making decisions, because they could provide information on the ‘negative impact on people if you take this away’ (Participant 8), and that the ability to review funding decisions would be beneficial. This was mentioned as a potential option by one participant: ‘the Law Reform Institute in its most recent paper *Review of the Judicial Review Act* has suggested that funding that is provided by government for a public good is subject to review’ (Participant 6), meaning that if programs are defunded, the organisation

that receives the funding can have the decision reviewed. However, at the end of the day, participants agreed that because there is a public benefit to reintegrate formerly incarcerated persons, it is ‘really important that the funding is provided by the state’ (Participant 6), and that finally, ‘if government was investing as much in rehabilitation as they are in locking people up, we’d be having a different conversation here. I think we’d be having a more positive conversation’ (Participant 3). This different conversation had to include changing public opinions about crime and punishment.

Changing public attitudes and providing opportunities

It was recognised that ‘popular opinion is so powerful’ (Participant 8) and that ‘some community education would be nice’ (Participant 9) to increase community awareness of prison, incarcerated persons, and their experiences and stories. It was argued that ‘when we have face-to-face contact with someone that’s not just a piece of paper, our attitudes change quickly’ (Participant 5) and that community engagement is important to show the community that ‘our people can actually make a positive impact, because people really think that they are useless and a waste of space’ (Participant 8). Furthermore, it was highlighted that the community forget that ‘one day these people are going to get out, and the worse they are treated in here, the worse it is going to be for them when they get out, and most of all the community’ (Participant 9) and that ‘if you stick a dog in a cage and poke it for 10 years, when you let it out, you think it’s not going to bite? It’ll bite’ (Participant 2). This illustrated the importance of a rehabilitative focus rather than a punitive one. The complexities of intertwining the public’s attitudes and politics was highlighted by one participant:

It is that disjoint between punishment and rehabilitation. “They don’t deserve to be rehabilitated”, but if you punish somebody, they don’t rehabilitate, and they’ll reoffend. Punishment doesn’t work. It doesn’t work. – Participant 8

Participants also mentioned the media and the importance of changing media organisations’ attitudes and practices in reporting crime, and convincing them to report the positive stories because ‘if you tell that story in a positive light, your readers are going to believe you, and you’re going to learn something, personally’ (Participant 5). As previously mentioned, part of some participants’ jobs is to listen to incarcerated persons’ stories, and it was raised as an important ingredient to changing people’s attitudes towards returning citizens. It was argued that getting ‘people in to see what it is really like [in prison], and to hear some of the stories’ (Participant 9), would help educate the community and change attitudes. It was further highlighted that by providing employment opportunities for returning citizens in the community, those ‘employers can start to get that message out that “I have half a dozen blokes that were in jail, but they are doing a great job”’ (Participant 8), which can build ‘that message that actually there’s a lot of great things about these people – they just need an opportunity’ (Participant 5). These opportunities also assist in reintegration as they provide pro-social connections, and result in them ‘earning money and contributing to the wider community’ (Participant 5), which is beneficial to everyone. The current system’s inability to provide these opportunities, together with its concurrent expectation that they refrain from future offending, was summarised by one participant:

Without providing opportunity to people upon release - and these are people that we identify that don’t have the skills to create opportunity... That they haven’t been taught the skills and we haven’t provided them the right skills, but we do

have an expectation that they do it. The thing that we have an expectation they do doesn't exist. Your perfect example is when an inmate walks out from jail and they get a \$200 Centrelink upfront payment and they say, "Right, you are now bailed to an address you don't have; you're going to survive on your \$200; and you've got to get a job, and you've got to do this, and you've got to do that".

– Participant 5

Participants argued that the general public's punitive attitudes stem from inaccurate information, largely from the representation of currently and formerly incarcerated persons in social media, news, and movies. The public plays an important role in electing the government, and therefore contribute to the use of tough on crime approaches. To change the tough on crime movement, and move towards a more rehabilitative approach, there is a need for community engagement and awareness to inform the public about what prison and its inhabitants are actually like. By moving away from punitive attitudes, and instead provide opportunities for returning citizens, will result in a much safer community.

Conclusion

This chapter has presented an in-depth account of the consequences of program churn and the lack of continuity that it accompanies. The data shows that several of the consequences of defunding the REO program overlap the consequences of starting and defunding programs. The chapter began by discussing these overlapping consequences, which include loss of relationships, loss of trust, confusion, and lack of understanding. It then proceeded to discuss consequences that arise from the continuous cycle of defunding programs, which results in returning citizens continuing to experience systematic failures – which often has begun at a very young age – and being unable to move past the 'inmate' identity, and deal with the

discrimination and stigma that comes with being labelled an ‘ex-offender’. Overcoming the general public’s judgement and finding employment and housing opportunities were argued to be particularly difficult in a small jurisdiction, such as Tasmania, where everybody knows everybody, thus indicating the need to change attitudes.

The chapter proceeded to further dissect the loss of professional relationships and human capital when programs lack continuity in funding. New programs are met with cynicism and wariness from both currently incarcerated persons and staff, which can be particularly problematic for program operations until new professional relationships have been fully developed. Loss of human capital and experience was also highlighted by participants as a substantial consequence, as the individual characteristics required to work with returning citizens are unique, and not often something that can be taught. The lack of continuity in funding also becomes a problem in recruiting the best people for the job, as it was established that workers in the sector are keen to be involved in something long-term. This further tied into workers experiencing disengagement and burnout. Due to the emotionally demanding nature of this work, and the propensity for workers to invest themselves in their jobs and clients, it was recognised that the potential for stress-related burnout - and the subsequent impacts of that on families – was high. It was argued that the government’s lack of commitment to the rehabilitation area was one of the underlying causes for short-term funding and competitive tendering, which impacts an organisation’s ability to plan for the future, and to provide quality services. Throughout the study, participants identified some underlying factors for this lack of commitment, such as the propensity to employ tough on crime approaches, which stem from a fear of crime. This led to a discussion of the role that social media, movies, and the news, plays in perpetuating this fear of crime, which further impacts populist politics and tough on crime policies.

The chapter concluded by presenting potential solutions to this lack of commitment. Participants spoke of what constitutes good social policy, and how there needs to be a greater emphasis on rehabilitation, rather than punishment, and provided ideas on innovative policies, such as social impact bonds, as it was recognised that organisations need to be more creative in where they source their funding. The chapter then proceeded to discuss the importance of changing attitudes and providing opportunities for returning citizens, and how the two can intertwine, to facilitate a safer society. This quote by one participant, perfectly summarises this chapter, and the thesis now moves to concluding thoughts:

We should celebrate the fact that somebody has rehabilitated. We shouldn't judge them because of what they've done. We should be celebrating the fact that now you're back on the street talking to me. That's wonderful. I want to provide you opportunity to prevent you going back. – Participant 5

CHAPTER SIX

Discussion and conclusion: Supporting returning citizens

Introduction

This research has sought to develop an understanding of the consequences of removing a transitional support and accommodation program, and the pattern of ‘program churn’, within the Tasmanian context. It also endeavoured to provide an understanding of the underlying factors to this ‘program churn’, and what would contribute to future sustainability of reintegration programs. The dissolution of the Reintegration for Ex-Offenders’ (REO) program culminated Tasmania’s program churn after close to thirteen years of different programs, from XCELL, to the Parolees Transitional Accommodation Project, to the Post-Release Options Program, to the Transitional Support Model for ex-Prisoners, the REO program, and lastly its continuation in the Intensive Tenancy Support Services. Drawing upon the knowledge of eleven participants with various involvement in the Reintegration for Ex-Offenders’ program, and who remain active in the reintegration sector and criminal processing systems in Tasmania, four overarching themes emerged. Firstly, the findings suggest that transitional support programs are ineffective without ongoing funding and continuity, due to the relationship breakdown and diminished trust between returning citizens and service providers, and further disconnect from the community due to perpetuated system failure. Secondly, the lack of commitment towards reintegration programs has consequences for inmates and returning citizens, such as remaining in the system for longer than necessary, and increased risk of reoffending upon release. Thirdly, REO’s dissolution and ongoing program churn lead to consequences for service providers, such as loss of professional

relationships, frustration, and health implications. Finally, the consequences of program churn and further reincarceration has larger implications for the community, such as ongoing and increased social costs of imprisonment - both monetary and intangible emotional costs, such as suffering experienced by victims, victims’ families, and offenders’ families. In discussing key themes of recidivism, health impacts, and costs, this chapter draws upon their meanings, reflecting upon the analysis of consequences (Chapter Four and Five), the contextual and theoretical understanding behind transitional support, accommodation, and reoffending (Chapter Two), as well as punitive attitudes and tough on crime approaches (Chapter Two), and finally, the implications that these findings have regarding policy and practice.

Reflections: Consequences for returning citizens

Research continuously suggests that previously and currently incarcerated persons are amongst the most marginalised persons in our society (Jones-Finer & Nellis, 1998), are highly disadvantaged in employment, education, family and social relationships, and health (Willis, 2004), and more likely than the general population to face homelessness or housing difficulties both pre- and post-incarceration (Baldry et al., 2003b). Research argues that returning citizens need accommodation, food, and legitimate employment opportunities, to feel like dignified and valued members in the community (Halsey, 2010), and that lack of housing can result in ‘survival offending’ (Payne et al., 2015). This research firmly upholds the need for stable housing and transitional support to successfully reintegrate within the wider community. Additionally, the inability to access housing meant that people remained incarcerated when they were otherwise eligible for parole. The rule of law demands that a person serve their sentence and no more, and the continual deprivation of liberty due to the government’s inability to provide housing can therefore be considered a breach of human

rights. The study further corroborates the association between homelessness and criminal behaviour, with participants in this research identifying accommodation as the foundation for stability. It was argued that without proper housing and opportunities upon release, returning citizens will go into survival mode. This study further extended the notion of ‘survival offending’ (Payne et al., 2015) to include reoffending as a means of accessing accommodation, as prison provides a roof, a bed, and three meals per day. It was further argued that without addressing someone’s basic needs – such as adequate living arrangements and the ability to feed oneself – ongoing support is futile. However, the provision of accommodation needs to be coupled with ongoing transitional support, tenancy support, and pro-social modelling to guide returning citizens to ‘live straight lives’ (Participant 2) and facilitate reintegration.

Research indicates that factors impacting formerly incarcerated persons include unresolved substance dependence and trauma, and stigma, create social exclusion, which inhibits reintegration, and furthers the difficulties of exiting prison (Halsey, 2007; 2010; Halsey & Harris, 2011). Furthermore, incarcerated persons take on identities within the prison setting that do not facilitate reintegration on the outside (Bernburg & Krohn, 2003; Bernburg et al., 2006; Chiricos et al., 2007; Rowe, 2011), and face stigma and discrimination upon release (Halsey, 2010). This was recognised in Chapter Five, where participants emphasised the power of identity, and the stigma and discrimination that returning citizens face, both in acquiring housing and employment. It was further highlighted that the stigma and difficulties of exiting prison are exacerbated in a small jurisdiction such as Tasmania, where everybody knows everybody, and labels are particularly difficult to eliminate.

It is recognised that the prison environment requires skills and knowledge vastly different to those required in the community (Halsey, 2010), and that imprisonment generates a divide between the incarcerated person and life on the outside, resulting in isolation and

disconnect from community and their loved ones (Halsey & Harris, 2011). The need to obtain new skillsets to survive in prison and the separation from pro-social connections coupled with a lack of social, life, and coping skills (Willis, 2018), arguably fails to produce returning citizens that are mature, responsible, rehabilitated, and fully capable of socialising upon release (Halsey & Harris, 2011). Participants spoke of social isolation, and how the defunding of REO consequently removed contact with pro-social connections, thus leaving returned citizens feeling alone upon release from prison, which was described as a ‘community’, and at risk of reconnecting with pro-criminal acquaintances. Furthermore, the very nature of the prison environment removes decision-making, and transitional support is a key opportunity to provide returning citizens with the life skills and independence to make it on the outside.

Reflections: Consequences for service providers

Service providers spoke of a loss of professional relationships between organisations, and the wider implications on support and accommodation, thus impacting returning citizens.

However, they also spoke of frustration, lack of understanding, and the potential to become cynical, disengaged, and experience burnout. The pattern of program churn consequently has serious health implications for service providers. Research on social workers indicate that they are passionate, and have a genuine commitment to their clients (Huxley et al., 2005).

This was corroborated by participants in this study who spoke of having a vocation, being passionate, and going above and beyond for their clients. Research indicates that, due to the emotionally demanding nature of their roles, social workers risk compassion fatigue and stress-related burnout (Collins, 2008; Grant & Kinman, 2011; Huxley et al., 2005; Lloyd et al., 2002; Portnoy, 2011), something that was highlighted by participants who recognised the potential for burnout and vicarious trauma, which may result in stress leave, and family relationship breakdown. However, participants argued that the largest risk for burnout is the

frustration experienced when going above and beyond, and putting in time and effort into assisting their clients, without it being recognised by the government in recurrent funding.

All consequences highlighted by participants in this study had the same ramifications: people remaining in the system for longer than necessary, and being released without accommodation or support, thus increasing the risk of reoffending, as supported by current literature. This ties into social consequences, such as increased prison-associated costs

Reflections: Consequences of lack of government commitment and discontinuity

This research has suggested that the pattern of program churn renders transitional support programs ineffective due to lack of ongoing funding and continuity. The study found that the lack of commitment that underlies program churn further leads to relationship breakdown between service providers and returning citizens when programs cease to operate due to lack of funding. In the interim between a program’s dissolution and another’s implementation, there is a lack of support for people exiting prison, which increases their risk of being released into homelessness, without any assistance to address their criminogenic needs. Furthermore, when a new program is implemented, it is met with cynicism and wariness, and is therefore ineffective until such a time when trust between the service providers and currently incarcerated persons has been rebuilt. Participants reported that a lack of government commitment serves as a perpetuation of system failure for returning citizens who have often been failed throughout their lives, thus causing returning citizens to further disconnect from the wider community. This continuous funding and defunding cycle of programs does not work, which means that people are not getting adequate support post-release, resulting in reoffending, which impacts society with future crime, future victims, and future costs.

Reflections: Social consequences

The individual consequences highlighted by participants in this study ultimately lead to increased recidivism rates, prolonged incarceration, and health implications for service providers, all of which lead to additional costs for government and the general public. As argued in Chapter Two, the monetary cost of (re)incarceration is exorbitant, but it does not take into account the physical and mental costs of reoffending, and the impacts on victims, victims’ families, or the families of incarcerated persons (La Vigne et al., 2008; Murray & Murray, 2010). Offending can result in family dysfunction, loss of housing, and loss of income for families of both victims and incarcerated persons. The direct economic costs of imprisonment were discussed in Chapter Two, where it was argued that Tasmania’s daily prison cost exceeds the national average by 25 per cent (Productivity Commission, 2018). Aside from direct economic costs, there are also indirect costs relating to loss of employment during and post-release and deterioration of skills (Travis et al., 2014), whilst also leading to increased reliance on government payments and welfare due to loss of income for the family (Sugie, 2012). These costs become more complex with parental incarceration, which creates a less stable homelife for children, the disruption of family environment, and the difficulties associated with visiting the parent within the prison system (La Vigne et al., 2008; Murray & Murray, 2010). The incarceration of a parent – in particular a mother – may result in child welfare agencies and placement in out-of-home care, and increase risks of abusing drugs and alcohol, dropping out of school and exhibiting antisocial behaviour (La Vigne et al., 2008; Murray & Murray, 2010). The pattern of program churn thus results in added costs for policing, courts, and imprisonment, but also health and welfare, as well as psychological costs, that are distributed to the wider community, as well as returned citizens and their families.

Implications: The need for change of attitudes and ongoing commitment

The need for ongoing government commitment to rehabilitation and reintegration has been strongly emphasised throughout this thesis, with participants agreeing that without real investment, their ability to help is limited. Despite proclaiming that government has a responsibility to fund reintegration programs, as they deliver public benefit, participants acknowledged the need for creativity in sourcing funding, and spoke of innovative policies, such as social impact bonds – multiparty contracts between governments and funders to invest in better social outcomes that, if achieved, provides a return on investment – and the ability to review funding decisions. This study found that a failure to invest in transitional and accommodation support programs has consequences for returning citizens, which further impact taxpayers through increased monetary and social costs, thereby emphasising the importance of ongoing investment in the reintegration area. The participants in this study demonstrated that very serious consequences can come out of sudden removal of a successful program, including suicide of returned citizens.

The lack of ongoing funding and investment was recognised by participants on all levels, who argued that Australia has to be more innovative in how to address our returning citizens, and emulate other countries who have successfully addressed recidivism through a rehabilitative focus. It was further agreed by all that populist tough on crime approaches drive this lack of commitment. It is recognised that this focus on punishment, rather than rehabilitation, originate from the general public’s fear of crime and punitive attitudes (Brookman & Wiener, 2017; Jones & Weatherburn, 2010; Roberts & Indermaur, 2007), which are further argued to stem from crime sensationalism that lead to the development of ‘folk devils’ and ‘othering’ (Clifford & White, 2017). This othering was corroborated by participants, who argued that this kind of separation – an ‘us versus them’ mentality – facilitate the general population’s belief in a just world where people get what they deserve.

Tough on crime approaches and incarceration do not reduce recidivism (Cullen et al., 2011; Elikann, 1996; Kelly, 2015; Lynch & Sabol, 1997), and as such, it is imperative that Australia moves towards evidence-based reintegration policies that are not impacted by populist politics. Considering that the government is populated by politicians who want to remain in power and who are elected by the general population, Australians’ punitive attitudes need to be challenged. By changing attitudes towards formerly incarcerated persons, returning citizens will feel more welcomed and included upon their release, and have access to prosocial modelling through interactions with the wider community, which further positively impacts a prosocial lifestyle and reintegration (Baldry et al., 2006; Borzycki & Baldry, 2003; Przybylski, 2008). Chapter Four and Five highlighted the role that employment opportunities play in providing a foundation for returning citizens to contribute financially to their families and society. It also demonstrated how these opportunities and interactions can assist the public in understanding that formerly incarcerated persons can ‘make a positive impact’ (Participant 8). Interactions between incarcerated persons and the public can be facilitated through community engagement, with events such as Artists with Conviction (Tasmania Prison Service) and other community service activities, such as incarcerated persons assisting in bushfire recovery after the Dunalley bushfires in 2013 (Ogilvie, 2013; White, 2015). Furthermore, participants highlighted that encouraging the public to spend time with incarcerated persons, and hear returning citizens’ sometimes heartbreaking life stories and experiences, could help the public see the human side to incarcerated persons. Community education and awareness are first steps in challenging punitive attitudes, and contribute to an increased understanding of the need to focus on rehabilitation and reintegration rather than incapacitation, which might just persuade our government to make evidence-based policy decisions.

Recommendations: Supporting the successful reintegration of returning citizens

This research stresses the importance of available transitional support for returning citizens to facilitate their return to the wider community, and the need for ongoing funding to ensure that adequate support pre-and post-release is provided. This transitional support has to be coupled with accommodation and tenancy support, and therefore, available housing for formerly incarcerated persons. Amidst the distinct lack of available and affordable housing in Tasmania (Burgess, 2018; Eccleston et al., 2018), it is therefore increasingly important that a specialised service is provided on an ongoing basis to provide accommodation support to returning citizens, to ensure that they are not forgotten/missed. The recommendation for support is longstanding (see Baldry et al., 2003a; 2003; 2006; Borzycki & Baldry, 2003; Day et al., 2004; Howells & Day, 1999). However, it appears that Australian state and territory governments fail to adhere to evidence-based policies due to public perceptions of crime rates. As such, it is recommended that a focus on community awareness and education is implemented, so that the public understand that fear of crime is a misconstrued concept not founded in evidence, statistics, or real life. Australia’s crime rates are steadily declining (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2008; 2018), and yet the use of imprisonment as a first rather than last resort appears common. Over the past five years, custodial orders have increased at a disproportionate rate to community-based orders (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2018).

The recommendation, therefore, is to implement public education on what is actually going on within criminal processing systems rather than the public relying on inaccurate accounts from social media, news agencies, and movies (see Clifford & White, 2015). Community education and awareness will challenge the public’s punitive attitudes which are based on irrational fear, and will therefore reduce the stigma faced by returning citizens which further facilitates their reintegration upon release (Halsey, 2010). Educating the public on returning citizens’ needs, and the importance of providing opportunities for employment,

housing, and pro-social relationships will not only make these opportunities more probable, but will further allow returning citizens to construct a new identity. This will enable them to move away from stigma associated with identities of ‘offender’, ‘inmate’, and ‘prisoner’ (Bernburg & Krohn, 2003; Bernburg et al., 2006; Chiricos et al., 2007; Rowe, 2011). By providing returning citizens with employment opportunities, they are given a chance to integrate with, and contribute to the wider community, thus enhancing community safety by removing some of the criminogenic needs that contribute to further offending (Bradley et al., 2001; Cunneen & Luke, 2007; Payne et al., 2015; Weatherburn, 2001).

Limitations, reservations and future directions

In interpreting the findings of this research, certain reservations must be considered. Firstly, this exploratory study has only been conducted on a small scale in Tasmania, and as such, the generalisability of the study is limited. The number and type of participants in this study are another limitation, as it is plausible that many individuals would have liked to participate in this study, but were unable due to time restrictions and not fitting the ‘participant description criteria’. Time limitations prevented the study being conducted over a wider area with more participants. The researcher acknowledges that these people would have knowledge and opinions valuable to the study. It is furthermore acknowledged that, due to ethics restrictions, people with lived experience did not participate in this study. The consequences relating to incarcerated persons are therefore informed by conversations with service providers and people in contact with returning citizens, which may not be an accurate representation of previously incarcerated persons’ opinions and experiences.

It should further be recognised that the sample may not be wholly representative of the wider reintegration sector. However, despite participants’ various involvement – and thus potential bias - with the REO program, it should first be noted that outputs from all

participants have been uniform, including those with no vested interest in its ongoing operation. Secondly, it should be highlighted that the researcher was unsuccessful in organising interviews with the organisation that acquired the accommodation service aspect of REO and who, as such, could not provide their perspective on the lack of housing for returning citizens. Thirdly, it is difficult, if not impossible, to prove a causal relationship between the defunding of any transitional support program and increased incarceration and recidivism rates. However, in light of the research discussed in this study and the findings in Chapter Four and Five, it is plausible that the two are strongly associated.

This research has highlighted the role that populist politics play in the government’s inability to provide ongoing funding to transitional support and accommodation support programs. It also shows how these tough on crime approaches, despite their ineffectiveness in addressing criminal behaviour, originate to please their electorates, whose attitudes are driven by a lack of knowledge and a fear of crime. As such, future research should examine the general public’s attitudes towards returning citizens, and how these can be changed to favour transitional and post-release support for previously and currently incarcerated persons, as it is argued that these attitudes underpin the lack of commitment in the reintegration domain.

Concluding remarks

As described by people involved in the reintegration sector in Tasmania that participated in this study, the consequences of not providing transitional and accommodation support to returning citizens impact every single one of us in society. The defunding of the REO program resulted in a lack of specialised services, and lack of housing and support, which lead to persons remaining incarcerated for longer than required, and experiencing a higher risk of reoffending upon release. The program’s dissolution impacted the relationships between incarcerated persons and service providers, and between organisations, which in turn

broke down trust in the very community service providers wanted to assist, thereby adversely impacting the availability of transitional support and increasing the risk of reoffending.

Program churn further generates health implications for returning citizens – who already face inferior physical and mental health compared to the general population - and service providers, who experience an increased risk of disengagement and burnout. REO’s dissolution, and the pattern of program churn, cumulated in a sense of continued failure for a cohort that have experienced systemic failures throughout their lives, and who, as such, disengage from society, further increasing the risk of reoffending. The consequences experienced by currently incarcerated persons and service providers amounted to social costs associated with recidivism. These social consequences include financial costs related to policing, courts, incarceration, and health, as well as emotional costs for victims, and families of victims and incarcerated persons.

If returning citizens are to be given the best chance to reintegrate within the wider community, there has to be an ongoing commitment to invest in transitional support programs and opportunities for accommodation and employment, as well as a change in attitudes from the general population to allow for social inclusion. Prosocial modelling, an integral aspect of reintegration and crime desistance, is removed for those who experience social isolation and lack a sense of belonging or community (Baldry et al., 2006), which can further aggravate issues with accommodation, employment, mental health, and offending behaviour (Willis, 2018). There is also a need for further research focused on the impact of defunding significant and successful reintegration programs like REO across Australia to better understand the impact of defunding decisions on the end users, including the service providers working for and with the end users (and in this case returning citizens). The support provided through these programs is integral to returning citizens’ social inclusion and ongoing prosocial lifestyle, and must therefore be adequately funded. However, returning

citizens must also be included in, and respected by, the community and provided with opportunities for employment and accommodation. A criminal processing system that seeks to decarcerate rather than imprison, to rehabilitate rather than punish, where persons can serve their sentence in the community without disrupting families, and thereby contribute to the wider community, would be a far better and more viable alternative to our current system which focuses on incapacitation. Australia should thus strive towards a collective responsibility for reintegration and crime desistance, shared amongst the returning citizen, the government, and the community.

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Appendix A – Ethics Clearance

Social Science Ethics Officer
Private Bag 01 Hobart
Tasmania 7001 Australia
Tel: (03) 6226 2763
Fax: (03) 6226 7148
Katherine.Shaw@utas.edu.au



HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (TASMANIA) NETWORK

29 May 2018

Dr Angela Dwyer
Office of the School of Social Sciences
Private Bag 22

Dear Dr Dwyer

Re: MINIMAL RISK ETHICS APPLICATION APPROVAL
Ethics Ref: H0017307 - Impacts of Defunding Tasmania's Reintegration for Ex-Offenders Program

We are pleased to advise that acting on a mandate from the Tasmania Social Sciences HREC, the Chair of the committee considered and approved the above project on 11 May 2018.

This approval constitutes ethical clearance by the Tasmania Social Sciences Human Research Ethics Committee. The decision and authority to commence the associated research may be dependent on factors beyond the remit of the ethics review process. For example, your research may need ethics clearance from other organisations or review by your research governance coordinator or Head of Department. It is your responsibility to find out if the approval of other bodies or authorities is required. It is recommended that the proposed research should not commence until you have satisfied these requirements.

Please note that this approval is for four years and is conditional upon receipt of an annual Progress Report. Ethics approval for this project will lapse if a Progress Report is not submitted.

The following conditions apply to this approval. Failure to abide by these conditions may result in suspension or discontinuation of approval.

1. It is the responsibility of the Chief Investigator to ensure that all investigators are aware of the terms of approval, to ensure the project is conducted as approved by the Ethics Committee, and to notify the Committee if any investigators are added to, or cease involvement with, the project.

2. Complaints: If any complaints are received or ethical issues arise during the course of the project, investigators should advise the Executive Officer of the Ethics Committee on 03 6226 7479 or human.ethics@utas.edu.au.
3. Incidents or adverse effects: Investigators should notify the Ethics Committee immediately of any serious or unexpected adverse effects on participants or unforeseen events affecting the ethical acceptability of the project.
4. Amendments to Project: Modifications to the project must not proceed until approval is obtained from the Ethics Committee. Please submit an Amendment Form (available on our website) to notify the Ethics Committee of the proposed modifications.
5. Annual Report: Continued approval for this project is dependent on the submission of a Progress Report by the anniversary date of your approval. You will be sent a courtesy reminder closer to this date. **Failure to submit a Progress Report will mean that ethics approval for this project will lapse.**
6. Final Report: A Final Report and a copy of any published material arising from the project, either in full or abstract, must be provided at the end of the project.

Yours sincerely

Emma Field
Ethics Officer
Tasmania Social Sciences HREC

Appendix B – Information Sheet

Private Bag 22 Hobart
Tasmania 7001 Australia
Phone (03) 6226 2331 Fax (03) 6226 2864
Email Social.Sciences@utas.edu.au



SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Title of project: Impacts of Defunding Tasmania's Reintegration for Ex-Offenders' Program.

Invitation to participate

We would like to invite you to take part in a study exploring the Reintegration for Ex-Offenders' (REO) program, its operations, and success, and the impact of the dissolution of the program in 2015. This research is being conducted in partial fulfilment of a Master's Degree, and the researcher for this project is Ms Ebba Herrlander Birgersson (Master's student) under the supervision of Associate Professor Angela Dwyer and Professor Rob White, at the School of Social Sciences at the University of Tasmania, Hobart.

What is the purpose of this preliminary study?

The purpose of this study is to gather interview data from key stakeholders about the Reintegration for Ex-Offenders' program, its operations, and success, and the impact of its dissolution in 2015. The key aims of the project include reviewing current research regarding homelessness, criminal behaviour, and reoffending, and investigating the impact of removing a transitional accommodation service, on service providers, incarcerated persons and prison overcrowding, to provide a platform of discussion for future policy implications.

Why have I been invited to participate in this study?

You have been asked to participate because of your involvement with the Reintegration for Ex-Offenders' program, as you possess important knowledge about its operations and success, which will provide us with vital information about the program's success and shortcomings, to enable a platform for discussion for future transitional support programs.

What does this study involve? What types of questions will be asked? If you agree to participate in this study, you will do an interview with the student researcher about your knowledge of the REO program. The interview will be audio recorded and will take approximately one hour of your time. The interview will take the form of a conversation, giving you the opportunity to share your role in the program and other information you consider to be important. Key questions of interest involve the program's operations, what contributed to its success or shortcomings, the impacts its dissolution has had on service providers, incarcerated persons, and prison overcrowding.

All comments and responses will be treated confidentially. The names of individual persons are not required in any of the transcripts, and your comments will be assigned a pseudonym. The audio recordings will be deleted as soon as the data has been analysed, and the recordings will not be used for any other purpose. Your interview will be stored securely as per UTAS' policy.

You will be given 14 days to review your interview transcript prior to the researcher commencing data analysis.

Are there any possible benefits from participation in this study?

Some research has been conducted on the relationship between homelessness and criminal behaviour. However, there is a lack of knowledge regarding accommodation and transitional support and desistance from future offending. This study will provide an in-depth understanding on the implications of reintegration support on a personal and societal level, and hopes to open the platform for discussion between stakeholders and politicians to ensure that best practices are employed for future reintegration support.

Are there any possible risks from participation in this study?

There are no specific risks anticipated with participation in this study, other than those associated with the day to day risks involved in everyday life.

Your name and organisation will be redacted and re-coded to ensure anonymity. However, due to the small number of people supporting the reintegration of previously incarcerated people in Tasmania, it is possible that someone may be able to identify participants from interview extracts. As such, the researchers will ensure that all interview data is de-identified by assigning your transcript with an interview number. Furthermore, interview data will be reported in an aggregated de-identified format throughout potential publications.

What if I change my mind during or after the study?

If you do choose to participate, you are free to withdraw without providing an explanation. If you withdraw, we will ensure that all electronic versions of your interview are deleted, and hard copies of your interview are securely shredded. Should you change your mind regarding your participation, we ask that you withdraw prior to the 15th November 2018.

How will the results of this study be published?

The results of this study will be submitted in a Masters' thesis. Should you wish, the results can be emailed to you.

How do I volunteer to participate? How do I find out more about this research? If you would like to volunteer to participate or you want to discuss or ask questions about any aspect of this study, please contact us by:

	Ebba Herrlander Birgersson	Angela Dwyer
	University of Tasmania	University of Tasmania
Email:	Ebba.herrlanderbirgersson@utas.edu.au	Angela.dwyer@utas.edu.au
Phone:		03 6226 2337

This study has been approved by the Tasmanian Social Sciences Human Research Ethics Committee. If you have concerns or complaints about the conduct of this study, please contact the Executive Officer of the HREC (Tasmania) Network on (03) 6226 7479. The executive officer is the person nominated to receive complaints from research participants. You will need to quote [H0017307] as the ethics project number.

Thank you for taking the time to consider this study. If you wish to participate in this study, please sign the attached consent form. This information sheet is for you to keep.

Ms Ebba Herrlander Birgersson

Dr Angela Dwyer

School of Social Sciences, University of Tasmania

Appendix C – Consent Form

Private Bag 22 Hobart

Tasmania 7001 Australia

Phone (03) 6226 2331 Fax (03) 6226 2864

Email Social.Sciences@utas.edu.au

**SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES****PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM**

Study: Impacts of Defunding Tasmania's Reintegration for Ex-Offenders' Program

With respect to this study:

I understand that the preliminary study involves taking part in an audio-recorded interview for approximately 1 hour. The purpose of the interview will be to discuss the operations and success of the Reintegration for Ex-Offenders' program, and the impacts of its dissolution. I understand that participation in an interview will not involve any risk for me.

I understand that I may withdraw before, during or after the interview without any effect, and any data I have supplied to date can be withdrawn from the research at my request. I understand that should I wish to withdraw my participation or request that any data I have supplied be withdrawn from the research, this should be done prior to the master thesis' submission on 15th November 2018. I understand that my participation is voluntary.

I understand that I will be given 14 days to revise/amend/retract my interview transcription prior to the researcher commencing data analysis.

I understand that, should I not agree to the interview being audio recorded, the researcher will take notes throughout the conversation.

I agree that research data gathered from me for the study may be used by the researcher so long as the information for use in the thesis will not, under any circumstance, contain my name or identifying characteristics. I understand that the information I provide is confidential, and will be kept in secure storage at the University of Tasmania and will only be accessible to the researcher and her supervisors. I also understand that the audio recording will be destroyed after a 5-year period.

I understand that I may contact the researcher's supervisors Dr Angela Dwyer by **emailing** Angela.Dwyer@utas.edu.au or **phoning** (03) 6226 2337 with regard to any concerns I have about my participation in this study.

I agree to take part in the study specified above. I have had the study explained to me, and I have read the information sheet, which I keep for my records. I agree to:

I agree to take part in an interview with the researcher ☐ Yes ☐ No

I agree that the interview may be audio taped ☐ Yes ☐ No

I would like to have a summary of the results of the study ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, please enter your email address: _____

Participant's name: _____

Participant's signature: _____ Date: _____

Statement by the researcher:

I have explained the study and the implications of participation in it to this volunteer and I believe that the consent is informed and that he/she understands the implications of participation. ☐ Yes ☐ No

If the researcher has not had an opportunity to talk to participants prior to them participating the following must be checked.

The participant has received the Information Sheet where my details have been provided so participants have had the opportunity to contact me prior to consenting to participate in this study. ☐ Yes ☐ No

Researcher's name: _____

Researcher's signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix D – Interview Schedule

Private Bag 22 Hobart

Tasmania 7001 Australia

Phone (03) 6226 2331 Fax (03) 6226 2864

Email Social.Sciences@utas.edu.au



INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

How were you involved in the Reintegration for Ex-Offenders' program?

Can you provide me with some background information of the REO program?

How did the program operate on a daily basis?

What success did the REO program have for formerly incarcerated people as well as service providers?

What shortcomings did the REO program have?

What gap has been left by its defunding in 2015?

What are the impacts of its dissolution on service providers?

What are the impacts on current, and formerly incarcerated people?

What needs do you envision in the future, i.e. policy implications to improve support services?

What is of importance when discussing and implementing future programs?

There is a pattern of defunding and reinstating support programs. What do you see as the impact of this continuous cycle? What is lost during those years, and what kind of pressure does it add on service providers and incarcerated persons?

Any final comments?